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CALLED TO THE RESCUE

ANNA H. DRURY.

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CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

BY

ANNA H. DRURY,

AUTHOR OF

"MISREPRESENTATION," "THE STORY OF A SHOWER," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. ARCHDALE'S MISSION.

THE gamester who has lost his stake is generally the most eager for another trial. As Cosmo Dangerfield walked across the grounds of Comber Court, sore with the repulse he had met with, and furious at the coolness with which Sir Marcus had treated his claims, his best consolation lay in the formation of a new line of attack. That he might one day be revenged on the "insolent fashionable surgeon," who had bowed him out of his house as if he had been a troublesome patient, was a comfort

he promised himself on the spot, grinding his teeth as he did so. "I'd give a year of my life to slip little Mowatt upon him, and see him pay off his own score as well as mine," he thought. At present he must concentrate his powers on the pursuit of Adela Granard and her charge. Where had they found a refuge, and why had they quitted the Court? As he returned to the Green Rushes, where he had slept, he made one or two inquiries in a careless sort of way, but elicited nothing. The busy village, which made the doings of the Court its own, had not yet heard of the removal; and he was fain to trust to the sagacity of an ally he had already engaged—the young woman who waited upon him at the inn. The grand air of mystery which he knew so well how to assume, backed by his fair words and golden earnest of future reward, filled her with zeal in the service; and it was a glorious chance in his favour that she was in the grocer's shop when Thirza's love

of talking outran her discretion. She carried back to her strange lodger the address he sought; and that night, under the stars of a winter sky, Cosmo walked under Mrs. Keith's garden wall, and examined the premises with his own eyes.

If only Paul had still been in his service! But Paul made no sign—kept aloof from him like a wary dog, that knows its doom if it is caught; and evidently threw his experience into the opposite scale. The Green Rushes, however, supplied a messenger, by whom he despatched the note to Miss Wilmot the previous evening, which caused her so much embarrassment; recommending her, for her own sake, to meet him at the little railway station at eleven o'clock the following morning. And at that hour he was pacing up and down a raised piece of ground, whence he could see to a distance either way. There was no train due, and no one was about; still any one might have business at the station, so there

was nothing to attract attention in going there—a reason in favour of its selection. He had not watched long before he saw a lady advancing from the direction of the Court; but in height and carriage too unlike Miss Wilmot to be mistaken for her for a moment. He drew up his own portly figure, and descending the slope, met her about twenty yards from the station.

"I believe I am addressing Professor Dangerfield?" said the lady, as she might have greeted him in his own apartments. He bowed low, fixing his eyes upon her without any other reply.

"My friend Miss Wilmot, whom you were good enough to propose meeting on a matter of business, is unable to come herself: she has deputed me to arrange it for her, if quite agreeable to you."

"Nothing could be more agreeable to me than to make the personal acquaintance of Mrs. Archdale," returned the philosopher.

The recognition was so unexpected, that the lady could not disguise a little uneasiness. She observed with a light smile, that one never realized how much, or how little, one was known in the world.

"However, since you do know me, I have no need of introduction, and we may proceed to Miss Wilmot's business without further preface," she continued. "I trust, Professor, you have only been trying an experiment on the nerves of this young lady, and that you will let me see that letter destroyed, about which she is so unhappy, without obliging us to lay the matter before her guardian."

"I should be unwilling to do anything that might cause a coolness between Miss Wilmot and her guardian," said he, drily, "as I understand her future prospects depend very much on his pleasure."

"She has means of her own, if you mean that," said Mrs. Archdale, quickly.

"Yes, madam, and ways of spending

them, as most ladies have. Hers would be but a small fortune to marry upon: as no one knows better than Mrs. Archdale."

"Do you propose trying my nerves too, Professor Dangerfield, by displaying knowledge of *my* private affairs? I give you notice, that I spring from a race of *esprits forts*—and that no wonders ever come to pass when one of us stands by."

"Not even such a wonder as a son concealing debts from a mother?—and a mother presuming on the confidence of a son?"

The words were spoken with a distinctness that seemed to ring through the listener's head, though he did not raise his voice in the least. She flung back her veil to breathe more easily; the blood rushed to her temples.

"Whatever you may mean by such a speech," she said, struggling to maintain her dignity, "it proves nothing more than this—that in some underhand manner the privacy of families can be invaded, and

slanderous stories repeated to their discredit. If this be spiritual science, I am glad I know nothing about it."

"It is our misfortune to give pain where we would gladly give peace," he returned gravely, with a touch of sadness in his tone. "Those who come to us for information do it in hopes to find their wishes presented to them in the form of prophecy; but we must tell the truth, and bear the abuse we meet with in return. You know whether I have told you truly or not; though the means of my knowledge are at present only a subject for your scorn. Take care, however, madam: these things are more serious than a lady's judgment can fathom."

She laughed bitterly. "I tell you again, Professor, I am a non-believer in all those mysteries. Were it possible for you, or any of your party, to call up a spirit whom I could summon, and he were to tell me what no one else can tell—then, indeed, I might admit you have power, either for bad or

good. At present I can only see a display of cleverness; and you must allow me to wish it were better employed."

"Mrs. Archdale, you doubt my power. As you have yourself fixed the test that would satisfy you, I accept the challenge, and will remind you of it some day. As proof of my good-will to you and yours, I grant your request, and give you the letter you ask for. Here it is. I only ask one small service in return."

"What may that be, sir?" said she, agitated in spite of herself.

"I ask nothing underhand; only that you will go without delay to Miss Granard, and ask if I may see my child Emily alone for ten minutes only. I have solemnly promised not to return without doing so, and hearing from her own lips that she refuses to return to her mother. I might, by means about which you are incredulous, obtain a meeting against her will, but this I will not do unless I am obliged; for, to

own the truth, I pay dearly enough for every exercise of power. If you can prevail on the young lady to grant my request, you will make me your servant, and find I can do much more than you suppose."

"I would rather have you for a friend than an enemy, Mr. Dangerfield; and though I do not see how you can serve me, I have no objection to deliver such a message—if you can really assure me that you mean only kindness to that poor child, who seems terribly afraid of you and your spirits, black or white, whichever they may be."

"Poor child, indeed!" said he, sadly. "It is a hard destiny to be the chosen of the invisible—the fire is too strong for the earthen mould, and the dignity is dearly bought. But such things are beyond our control. I myself am but an instrument, and what I do is often done against my will, exposing me to hatred—or, as you say, to slander. Those who have removed Emily from me have incurred a terrible respon-

sibility. The gift she possesses, if left unused, will be her destruction. I could guide it for her health and happiness; your fashionable doctor can only turn it so as to prey upon itself."

"Well, sir, that is for the doctors to decide. I am willing to tell Miss Granard what you say, and will take charge of the letter for Miss Wilmot."

He bowed, and handed it to her. She glanced carefully at the address: "Major Palmer." "Is it not a singular thing that this gentleman should part with a lady's note in this way?"

"It is well for Miss Wilmot that he did, madam. She made him jealous, and he has spoken bitterly in consequence—but this is the only document he had to show, and it is now in your power, no matter how it came into mine."

"And we are to be friends, then, Professor, while you are endeavouring to make me a disciple?"

"I shall be proud to earn the title of Mrs. Archdale's friend and servant."

"Then, between friends, what were you hinting at so mysteriously about mothers and sons? My boy and I understand each other better than any one could who came between us."

"When you return to your son, ask *him* what I meant: and, if it so please you, ask him also if he has any idea what deeds he signed when he was too ill to read them."

Proud and brave though she was, she could not repress a faint shriek. And, womanlike, lost her ground in the panic of the surprise.

"There was only one person who could have betrayed me," she said hoarsely. "And he is dead."

"Yes, madam, he is. To which circumstance I owe the knowledge which, as a living man, he would never have imparted."

"It is impossible—such things cannot be

—Christians have a better hope than that, for the world to come!" she repeated, as if thinking aloud. "I always heard the imposture was a marvel of clever wickedness, and now I know it is true!"

"Madam, those who boast of their Christian hope should surely be more careful of their Christian practice. If your son is satisfied, of course no one else has a word to say."

"You will not tell him!" gasped the lady, the bitter tears starting to her eyes.

"Are we not friends, Mrs. Archdale? You have honoured me with the name, and those of the noble house of De Sancy never use words without meaning. Had I wished to reveal your secret, I could have done it long ago. As it is, I pledge myself to silence—as your friend."

He extended his hand, in which, with a visible shudder, she placed her own. With a low bow of profound respect he then left her and entered the station, which had just shown signs of life.

As long as he was in sight, Mrs. Archdale remained like one paralyzed, unable to shake off the chill dismay caused by his words. When she could command her senses, the recollection of her promise obliged her not to return to the Court, but to go on at once to Adela's lodgings. It proved to be a longer walk than she anticipated; and, oppressed with harassing thoughts, by the time she reached Mrs. Keith's house, she was sufficiently exhausted to alarm Miss Granard by her paleness and agitation.

The image of Ernest, suffering, perhaps in danger, was instantly before Adela's eyes, and his name trembled on her lips; though she found it more difficult to inquire after him than she could have imagined. Mrs. Archdale was not too preoccupied to overlook the change of colour, the quivering of the mouth, which betrayed the interest excited by her unexpected visit; a faint smile played over her own troubled features as

she looked around the apartment, and congratulated her young friend on having discovered so pretty a bower for herself and her fugitive nestling.

"I see you trust Emily out of your sight sometimes," she remarked. "Is she gone to see the skating?"

"Oh no, poor child; I could not let her go off the premises. I am strongly advised to encourage her in every childish pursuit—to make her play, if I can; our landlady's daughter is a merry girl, and they are taking Coco for a run in the garden."

"And you, I see, are deep in accounts and correspondence, which I am interrupting," continued Mrs. Archdale. "But I promised a gentleman to bring you a request, and that must be my apology."

Adela tried to assure her of welcome, but could not meet her visitor's eyes; in which eyes the sense of discovery was dawning.

"Miss Granard," she said, after consider-

ing at her leisure the beautiful face, now partly turned aside, "in undertaking the charge of your friend's child, did you lay your account with danger and difficulty?"

"If I did not at the time, I certainly have had cause to do it since," said Adela, forgetting herself, in the dread of something unknown, for the tone of the question was peculiar. "Are you come to warn me of any new danger?"

"It may be a warning; but with that I have nothing to do. I have seen your Professor, and spoken to him, and it is his message I bring. Will you allow him five minutes' conversation with Emily, to discharge his conscience, so to speak, of a duty to her mother?"

"Certainly not. He shall not come near her, while I can prevent it."

"Then I have discharged *my* conscience; which is, I hope, more of a reality than his: and as you have, no doubt, good reasons for what you do, I shall not attempt to per-

suade you. But indeed, my dear Miss Granard, when I look at you, after looking at him, it requires strong belief in the goodness of your cause not to feel that such a duel is most unequal."

"You think him, then, a formidable enemy?"

"I did not, before I heard him talk just now. I met him on a matter of business, in as happy a state of scepticism as could be desired; and I am ashamed to say now, that I do not know what to think. Papers and magazines may go on arguing for ever without making an impression; but an experience of your own is quite another matter. I should not like him for an enemy myself."

"And I should be very sorry to have him for a friend. Dear Mrs. Archdale, it is difficult for me to explain what I feel; but when you have seen the invisible so awfully near you, as I have seen it—and realized the rest and peace it offers to the redeemed

—it seems like child's play to talk of spirits being at the beck and call of a man who has robbed his wife of every comfort, and wishes to ruin her child. Such a man is all the weaker for his wickedness and imposture: and, even if he is permitted to cause us pain and annoyance, he can only go as far as he *is* permitted; and there are more with us than with him."

"You really believe this?—not as a beautiful legend, but as a fact?"

"How can I help believing it? Is there not a special judgment pronounced upon those who wrong the children—whose angels behold their Father's face?"

"You take all literally. I wish I felt as you do: you would just suit my mother; some day I shall hope to make you acquainted. She is old, and leads a retired life, but if ever there was an angel on earth, she is one."

"And do you often see her?" said Adela, with glistening eyes.

"Not so often as would be good for me. Our paths lie in different directions; she is all for the next world, and I for this. I am worldly, and scheming, and want money, and to see my son rich, and honoured, and prosperous; and to compass that, I would make any one's weakness a step in my ladder: while she would take him by the hand with her own sweet smile, and say, 'My boy, it is to the poor and meek that the richest blessings are promised.'"

"And he—to which does he incline?" asked the young lady, involuntarily.

"He? Poor fellow! he loves his mother blindly, and could hardly be brought to think she could do wrong. But, should he ever open his eyes, and find her unworthy his reverence!—and he may: who knows? You have seen something of him—could he get over the fact of being deceived by the one he trusted as his own soul?"

"The little I know of him convinces me he would never fail in his duty, and you

must be too sure of his devotion to you to doubt him in earnest. If we run to our mothers to confess a fault—oh, if I only could to mine!—what should we do if they came to confess one to us?"

The widow rose from her seat, the tears streaming down her cheeks. Taking Adela's hand, she kissed her forehead.

"God bless you, my dear, for those kind words. It is no wonder now to me that you are not afraid of your enemy. You have opened a prospect before me which I must take a little time to realize. No—do not distress yourself about these tears; they have done me good. It is very seldom I get such a relief. Now I have done with personalities, and will talk of other things. Have you had any visitors this morning before me?"

"Mr. Bourne came over about an hour ago."

"Mr. Bourne! Did he ask you about a note to Miss Wilmot?"

"He said something about a note having arrived for her late last evening. I assured him it was not from me."

"That old gentleman has no more tact or discretion than an owl. He asks a young girl, before a room full of people, who her correspondent is—knowing by her silence that she has some reason for not mentioning the letter at all—and instead of waiting till they are alone, drives her into a corner, till she is compelled to shield herself behind an untruth, and say it comes from you."

"Compelled, Mrs. Archdale?"

"Morally, that is to say; any one with delicacy of feeling would have let her alone: but to carry on his watchfulness to the extent of espionage, is a stroke of which I did not think him capable. I came with an apology from Miss Wilmot, and a full confession, that you might be prepared; but I see I am too late. Poor Cecilia! she is having a mauvais quart d'heure, I fear."

"Pray assure her she need make me no

apology," said Adela, gravely. "But I do not see how I could have helped her had I been prepared."

"No, you are true English to the core, and you could not tell a lie to save your life. Well, I must leave you now to finish your letters, and find my way back to the Court, tired as I am."

Adela summoned Charles to escort Mrs. Archdale by the shorter cut through the meadows, by which Kate had come the day before. They parted on really friendly terms; the pressure of the elder lady's hand on that of the younger seeming to imply more than was spoken. Adela sat lost in musings afterwards, that were not favourable to the completion of her letters.

A rush of thick shoes on the stairs—the door bounced open—and Thirza standing before her, with eyes and mouth distended.

"Miss Emily's gone! She was there a minute ago, please, 'm, and I can't find her anywhere!"

Adela's heart gave a jerk that almost made her ill. She retained her presence of mind.

"Where was she?—where is she, Thirza? She cannot be far off." Thirza's answer came with terrified volubility.

"Please, 'm, my ball flew over the wall, and I opened the wooden door into the paddock, and Coco ran out, and Miss Emily after him—and I heard Coco squeak, and a gentleman had picked him up, and said he had hurt himself, and I must run in for some linen to bandage him—and I ran to mother, and she was out of the way, and I tore a kitchen cloth, and went back, and there's nobody there now, ma'am—nobody at all!"

Adela had snatched up hat and shawl while the girl was talking; hearing the words, it is true, but feeling almost stunned. She was hurrying down the stairs, when Archdeacon Burleigh's voice pealed from below.

"Thirza! Come here! What is it?"

Thirza flew down to tell her tale: her mother at the same moment appeared to hear it. The Archdeacon looked at his watch.

"There is no up train due for some hours. We shall catch him up, Miss Granard; never fear. Are your feet well cased against frost and snow? Are you thoroughly wrapped up? Then come with me; and, Mrs. Keith, do you keep a good watch on doors and windows, for this may only be a feint to throw us off our guard."

"Oh, Thirza, Thirza, if you had only done as you were told, and not opened the garden door at all!" lamented Mrs. Keith.

"Never mind that now, my dear woman—the mischief is done, and we know our weak point," said the Archdeacon. "Come along with us, child, and show us where you saw them last."

Glad to escape her mother's anger,

almost enjoying the excitement, in spite of her dismay, Thirza rushed on before. Her statement was verified by the state of the snow, and the traces of footprints, which could be followed to the high-road. For a short distance the smaller ones were visible, but they soon disappeared. It was evident that the child had been carried over the worst part of the drift.

"He would hardly have the face to take her to the Green Rushes before the eyes of half a dozen witnesses!" debated Mr. Burleigh. "Yet, where else could he go?"

"The coach passed just now," said Thirza.

"The coach! So it did. The thought is worth half a sovereign, which I'll give you to-night. Depend upon it, Miss Granard, if he is not at his inn, he has tried to throw us off the trail by taking her where he can get upon another line. A wily trick; but it shall not answer. To the

Green Rushes first; and there we will decide what to do next."

At the Green Rushes they could detect no appearance of concealment or surprise. No one seemed to know much about the gentleman's movements; however, Mr. Burleigh's energetic inquiries elicited the fact that he had paid his bill in the morning, and that his portmanteau had been sent down to the station. He had gone out, as he said, for a walk, intending to return, but he had not appeared yet.

Next, they went to the station: and found that the coach had stopped to pick up a gentleman's portmanteau—thus confirming the Archdeacon's first opinion.

"This is a matter for Sir Marcus," said Mr. Burleigh, as he came out with his fair companion. "We have already lost too much time, but he will spare neither man nor horse in pursuit, and we may catch them yet."

In the act of turning away to take the

short cut to the Court, a porter came running out to announce that a telegram had come for Miss Granard. It had evidently been delayed in transmission, and the news it brought was of Hester Dangerfield's death.

Adela's guardianship had begun.

CHAPTER II.

MR. BOURNE'S PROPOSAL.

FROM a troubled sleep, that was more like a dream of pain and distress than an interval of repose, Ernest Archdale awoke; and by a strenuous effort dressed himself, and went downstairs, that his mother might think him better when she returned. Sir Marcus was out on particular business: and Stephens attended on the young officer, Paul having been sent to keep watch over the movements of Cosmo Dangerfield. On repairing as usual to the library, for a quiet half-hour of rest, Ernest was somewhat startled to find there both Mr. and Mrs. Bourne, as well as Miss Wilmot; and so evident were the signs of a vehement

family discussion, that he would instantly have retreated, but was stopped short.

"You are the very person I want, young gentleman!" said Mr. Bourne, emphatically. "I am sorry to see you in such poor condition, but that is no doing of mine. You are man enough, unless I am much mistaken, to answer a plain question, whether well or ill."

"Dear Nicholas, now don't," pleaded his wife, who had been wiping her eyes. "You cannot understand—you are generally so strong—though I know you are sometimes much more poorly than you will allow; but this dear young man is so good, so patient—do let him sit down; and you can talk all this over by-and-by when you are cool, you know."

"Cool, my dear? I am an icicle at this moment. You want to make out that I am in a passion; but, though I have every reason for it, I am not. Cecilia, are you going away before I have done speaking?"

"I thought you had private business with Mr. Archdale, sir," returned she, colouring highly, but looking more defiant than humble.

"Not private at all; it is a simple question. Is it on business of yours, young gentleman, that your mother is gone out this morning?"

"My mother, sir, goes out when she pleases, and owes no account of her doings to anybody."

"Evasive, evasive—unworthy an officer and a gentleman. This is the fact; I have been told that such is the case, and I wish to know if it is true."

Ernest had by this time quietly seated himself in an easy chair, and the tone of his reply was as cool as Mr. Bourne's professed to be.

"Look here, Mr. Bourne; I do not understand any one's right to inquire into my mother's affairs, or mine; but since you ask me, I have no objection to allow that I *am*

very much interested in the result of her walk this morning. Having said that, I must decline answering any more questions about it."

"Of course," said Mrs. Bourne, "it is not likely, Nicholas dear, that young men should—dear me, if I had to tell you everything I did when I went out for a little shopping! and good Mrs. Archdale may have charitable work that nobody dreams of, and would not like to have talked about. This dear girl looks quite feverish with all this commotion; I shall beg our kind Kate to order her a little jelly, or a glass of wine. Come with me, my dear Cecilia, and let the gentlemen settle it all their own way."

And in her real kindness of heart, she carried off the young lady: who was fain to yield, though longing to be with Ernest alone, if only for five minutes.

Mr. Bourne's brow relaxed as they departed. He drew a chair to the table by which the young man sat, and held out his

hand to him—an amicable opening, of which Ernest availed himself.

"You were quite right to pull me up, if you supposed I meant disrespect to your mother. I meant nothing of the kind, though I do sometimes question her judgment and common sense. No affront intended—I only wish you well; and to come to the point at once, I should like to know how matters stand between my ward and you. I had no idea there was as much intimacy as there appears to be; and I have a right to know if there is anything more."

"There is nothing, sir, that you are not welcome to know. I had the pleasure of making Miss Wilmot's acquaintance in Ireland, and our meeting here was quite an accident."

"And it is quite an accident, I suppose, that your affairs, or those in which you are very much interested, are communicated to you or your mother through her, as we saw last night. My indiscretion in asking who

her correspondent was, drove her into an untruth, which is a thing I find hard to forgive, though it was my fault. That Professor fellow, who frightened her in the park, chose to send you a message through her, which your mother is gone to attend to."

Ernest remained silent, in an attitude of attention, but without allowing himself to be drawn into discussing the matter, which he now understood but too well. The old gentleman eyed him curiously, and shook his head in doubt.

"It is all too shifty and underhand to suit me," he said, "but you young people are not so particular as we were when we were young. Now, I am plain-spoken, and go straight to my point at once, and I ask you frankly, as a gentleman, have you the means to support a wife?"

"No, sir. And until I have you may be quite certain I shall not take one."

"Are you likely to get on in the army?"

"I have strong doubts of ever being fit for service again. Sir Marcus allows me to hope—but that is all."

"Bad, bad! Hard enough to rise, with every chance; but to lose all this time, and have to begin afresh after all, is very poor work. Why not strike out a new line at once? Do you want to make a living, or are you content with what you have?"

"You press me hard, Mr. Bourne; but as I know you mean kindly, I will own I am very anxious to make money, and am only waiting for health to come to a decision for the future. I feel painfully the drain I am on my mother's slender income; even though we make a joint purse, I am sure to get the lion's share."

"And your mother—charming woman, and well-informed, I am sure—is not a good woman of business, and what she seems to be convinced of one day, she goes and overturns the next. I hope you look well into your affairs yourself, and trust no woman,

were she ten times your mother, as Hamlet says."

"Suppose we leave my mother out of the question, Mr. Bourne. Are you asking me these things out of friendly curiosity, or what?"

"Out of good will to you, and a sense of duty elsewhere. In these days it is hard work to get on without a push at the right moment; and that push I may be able to give you, if you will decide to give up the army, and come into my house of business. Sir Marcus tells me you are a good scholar and accountant; for both those qualifications I could guarantee good pay, with the prospect later of increasing any capital you may throw into the concern. And if you want a friendly welcome in town, to dinner, or so forth, we shall be glad to see you, my wife and I—and you know what a hand she is at petting any one's ailments. Think this over at your leisure, and let me know before I go. We leave on Monday."

Mr. Bourne walked out of the library with the firm tread of a man who feels he has done a liberal thing, and extricated himself from a difficulty besides. The young man remained where he left him, sunk in a weary reverie, from which he felt no power to rise. His mother's step, and her touch on his shoulder, recalled him.

"I am ashamed of being so lazy, when you must be tired. Come and sit down by the fire, and tell me your adventures. You look as if you had seen a ghost, dear mother."

"Worse than that, Ernest—and better. I have talked with evil and good, but both were of flesh and blood. Dear boy, you never told me you had any dealings with that dangerous man."

"You have seen him, then? Don't mind anything he says or threatens. I am prepared, through the kindness of our friends here; and I never meant you to know how much your wise son had been taken in.

He has only helped me to make up my mind. Have you been of any use to Miss Wilmot?"

"I hope so. Poor girl, she has suffered a great deal, and Mr. Bourne's ungentlemanly conduct last night was inexcusable. I could not be severe on her subterfuge, considering how she was placed, but she is terribly ashamed and penitent."

"Penitence implies amendment, does it not?"

"Well, you would not have doubted her, had you heard her story. She may have been foolish, been carried away by vanity, and love of admiration; but she seems to have an affectionate heart, and, unless I am much mistaken, it is very sore on your account."

"It can never be as sore as mine has been on hers. Mother, I have been thinking it all over, and am afraid you have felt as if you had not been treated with confidence. But my dream was broken before I

could have told it—so rudely broken that I could not revive it now, if I would."

"And you would not now, if you could? I am not much surprised. But, my boy, is it quite certain that you did not go so far as to make her a sharer in the dream?"

"I never spoke of it to her; or to any one. I was not sufficient master of myself to prevent my love from being discovered. She herself found it out, and she let me think, in an insane moment, that I could gratify her by doing what I had better have left undone: the taking part in the steeple-chase. But I had no more to offer her then than I have now."

"I shall not attempt to plead her cause, Ernest; only do her this justice—I do not think she knew her own heart then as she knows it now; and she is wiser by a year's experience. And her prospects are good, though her fortune is small."

"I hope they are good—much better than what your kindness would plan,

mother. And, as my prospects may interest you more, what do you say to my giving up the army, and accepting a proposal made me this morning?"

He related what had passed. She listened with a cruel pang at her heart, knowing it would be madness to throw away such a chance of deliverance from their difficulties. Moreover, she was shrewd enough to discern in the offer an inclination on the part of Cecilia's guardian to further her wishes; and there might be a prospect of a possible succession to the business.

"He will be miles away from the other, and will in time forget her; their acquaintance has been very short, and nothing serious can have arisen in their hearts yet. Adela is worth much more than poor Cecilia, but it is not always those excellent creatures that men care for most; and she may have no prospects. It is better as it is."

Better as it is! Did Mrs. Archdale read

aright the glow of hope and earnestness that had begun to light up his eyes, so dim and sunken an hour before, as if now he saw a way opening to what had before looked unattainable? Her own sense of mortification and disappointment at his failure to follow the profession she had been so proud to see him choose—the only one she deemed fit for the last representative of an old warrior line—made her less observant than usual. She was tormented, moreover, with the remembrance of Dangerfield's insinuations; and with the debate, so often maintained between her pride and her honour, whether she could bring herself to own to her son a certain deed she had done; done, as she believed, for the good of both. Before she could decide on any such momentous step, an interruption put it out of the question. Voices were talking eagerly in the hall; and presently Cecilia's rose above the rest.

"Mrs. Archdale! where are you? Have you heard?"

Mrs. Archdale opened the door. In the hall, stood an eager, excited group, appealing to her, as being the bearer of Cosmo Dangerfield's message. Did she think, or suspect, that any one followed her to Miss Granard's?

The very idea made Mrs. Archdale shudder; and the thought in Cecilia's mind communicated itself to her own—there was either some power at work which she, Cecilia, could not fathom, or she had been made his instrument, perhaps the subject of his secret scorn. She looked with terror at Adela's face of anguish, rigid with the efforts she made to keep calm and collected, and involuntarily turned to see where Ernest was. He was behind her, and had seen that face too. He stepped forward with a decision that commanded attention.

"Miss Granard, this shall be looked to directly. A fellow who has dared so to treat my mother—and you—puts himself out of the pale of consideration; he can

only be hunted down. Useless as I am, I shall do my part, and I know I can answer for it my mother will. Frankland—Miss Combermere—you will help us, knowing the country. I am not the least afraid of the cold, if you can find me the carriage and horses. Let me but come up with that scoundrel, and I will teach him he has made a mistake."

"Not such a mistake as your going would be, my fine fellow," said the Archdeacon, "unless you took the ambulance with you. Driving after the scoundrel, as you mildly term him, would be easy enough with good horses, if one knew where he went to; but that coach may drop him anywhere, and he may strike across country to throw us off the trail."

"If he does, Archdeacon, we shall know it. He has a beagle on his traces, who will never lose the scent. He did not follow up my mother more closely than Paul is following him. I have been wondering why the

boy did not come back, and now I know; but no one but myself would understand the signals he will leave behind him, and whoever goes in pursuit, must endure having me for his companion."

The Archdeacon thought there might be something in this; that the exertion might, after all, do him good. But nothing could be done until Sir Marcus came in. Meanwhile, we will follow those, about whose proceedings all are so anxious.

If it was in some sense a triumph for Cosmo Dangerfield to carry off his stepdaughter in defiance of her friends, he was not long in discovering that he had undertaken an onerous task. He had followed Mrs. Archdale to Mrs. Keith's that he might be on the spot, should any opening occur for a negotiation; flattering himself that if he could but obtain a personal interview with Miss Granard, he should win her over, as others had been won. His previous inspection of the premises had shown him

the garden door in the wall, and he was vaguely speculating on the possibility of accomplishing an entrance that way, when he heard the sound of young voices on the other side, and soon after, a ball flew over into the whitened grass. He saw his chance, and waited; and as the sight of his face paralyzed Emily's tongue at once, he had no difficulty in getting rid of her companion, and then taking her with him. A few sternly spoken words were enough to enforce obedience; the only resistance she offered was on behalf of the dog, which she had clasped in her arms, and would not relinquish. He complied with the whim—it might be a means of controlling her later—and he carried her through the thickest part of the snowdrift, dog and all. Her silence rather alarmed him, and the peril of his attempt began to damp his ardour. The sight of the coach which he had heard spoken of the evening before decided him at once. He seated himself inside with the

child; fortunately for his plans, they had it all to themselves, and he thought it expedient to adopt a more conciliatory and paternal tone. He hoped she was not cold or wet; caressed Coco (who snapped at him in return), talked of the snowballing, the sliding, the skating, he had seen, and the nice journey they were going to take together, in the very way he imagined would amuse a child—but in vain. She sat holding her dog, and looking straight before her, without seeming to hear what he said, or to heed his presence. He had told the guard to pick up his portmanteau at the station, and leaned out of the window a few moments to make sure of his property. In that interval came a ray of comfort to his prisoner, for a joyful spring on Coco's part drew her eyes to the other window, where, for two seconds only, gleamed the eager eyes and white teeth of Paul Rocket.

Without in the least understanding how he could be there, she accepted the fact

with the simplicity of her nature; and when the Professor resumed his seat, and glanced anxiously up at her face, he saw in it a change. The pale cheeks had a tinge of colour; and, though she did not look at him, a quiet smile played on her lips, as she repeated something to herself which he could not hear.

"If she has learned to despise and scoff at me, and at all she used to be afraid of, I shall have to take her education in hand again," he thought, raging inwardly with a sensation almost approaching to fear of the helpless being by his side. It was strange that it should be so. The more composed and serene she looked, the more uneasy he grew; and he took an opportunity, as the coach was moving slowly up a long hill, with whitened fields on either side, to make an experiment upon her nerves.

"Have the spirits been near you lately, Emily?"

He knew how to modulate his voice, so

as to give solemnity to the question, and he saw a tremor pass over her small frame. But the answer was quite unexpected.

"There are more with us than with them," said Emily. The words were evidently a familiar phrase; indeed, they were what she had been repeating to herself the last half-hour.

"I told you, my child, that wherever you went I should be able to follow you. Those who are constantly watching you cannot be kept out by walls or bolts."

"They can't do anything," said the child, dreamily. "I have one of my own to take care of me. My father sent him on purpose."

"Indeed? And what can he do for you?"

"I don't know, but I think he is here."

She was so unlike what she had used to be under his influence, that he hardly knew how to proceed; and remained for some time plunged in silence. When the coach

stopped, about half-way to its destination, he ordered some refreshments to be brought, and insisted on Emily's partaking of them; which she did, though it was plain she had very little appetite. The pleasure of feeding Coco was some compensation for compliance; and soon after, the entrance of two more passengers broke up their privacy—a relief much greater to the man than to the child.

The town where the coach finally stopped was a junction for two lines of railway, and contained several large inns. It was dark when the travellers alighted; and with some little difficulty Dangerfield procured a fly, desiring the driver to take them to the hotel nearest to the station. Here he ordered some dinner in a private sitting-room, and confided to the civil hostess that he had just fetched his daughter from school to see her mother, who was dangerously ill; that the poor girl's nerves were very delicate, and that she must be kept perfectly quiet. By

some mistake, they had left her roll of cloaks behind, and he must go out to procure something to defend her from the cold —would she take charge of her till his return, and neither leave her alone nor allow any one to come near her? The good woman willingly consented, and in the warmth of her sympathy lavished kindnesses on poor Emily and Coco—brought them tea and toast from her own table, and praised the child for her courage and goodness in keeping up, so as not to distress her dear papa.

"I don't quite know what to make of her," she told her husband afterwards; "she is not like any child I ever saw; it is my belief she is not quite right in her head. She told me just now that she never was alone, because her father sent some one to take care of her. Poor lamb! it is plain enough what that must mean."

She was not the only person perplexed by Emily's behaviour. The passive resignation

with which she submitted, without appearing to think of escape, was easily accounted for, her stepfather thought, by the habit of obedience, combined with fear. But, knowing how often he had cowed her with a look, and seen her crouch with terror at his entrance, it was strange to him to find her large dreamy eyes turned full upon his own, as if studying every thought of his brain; and instead of shrinking from his gaze, almost quelling his courage by the steadiness of hers.

It was not a child's look. A child, such as he knew her to be, would either have fretted, or drooped, or been frightened. What spirit could it be that gleamed in those eyes? Had he tampered with a power that was being turned against himself? Was there more truth in the unseen than he had ever believed, while profiting by the terrors it excited? Had this frail and delicate organization, which he had thought to be entirely at his mercy, become the

medium by which a supernatural agency was preparing to bear him down?

Like many unprincipled men, who have thriven by deceiving others, he was on some points liable to deceive himself; and more than once had a doubt crossed his mind whether he were not venturing on dangerous ground. But he had never felt really afraid before; and the sensation was so insupportable that he drank more wine than he ought, considering the fiery nature of the vintage; and then, calling for his bill, announced his intention of starting for London by the next train. Instead of doing so, however, he took tickets for the town of X. in the Midland Counties, where they would arrive about one in the morning; hoping thus to baffle pursuit, and intending to make all speed to the metropolis the following day.

He had understood that they were in a "through" carriage, but, about ten o'clock, was disagreeably roused by a summons to

alight, and change for X. The night was dark, as the moon had not risen, and there was a considerable amount of confusion on the platform. The line had to be crossed by a bridge; and as the Professor was descending the steps, holding Emily's hand, he suddenly found his foot entangled in a cord. Before he could extricate himself, a violent jerk had flung him forward, so that he fell head foremost to the foot of the stairs.

Of course, in the darkness and confusion, people stumbled over him, and abused him for being there. The other train had just come up; haste must be made; and a porter came running to the assistance of the fallen gentleman, who was almost stunned, and bleeding from a cut on the forehead. Being urged to exert himself, or he would be left behind, he contrived to stagger to the platform, and was assisted into a carriage; when, his recollection returning, he started up, asking where his little girl

was—a young lady in a cloak, carrying a dog. Who had seen her?

The porter ran to inquire, and came back to say a young lady had been seen looking rather lost, and was safe in another carriage. There was no time for more, as the train swept on; and the Professor fell into an uneasy doze—the combined result of the wine and the accident. When he was roused again by the summons to alight, he hurried along the platform in quest of Emily.

She was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW FRIEND.

When Paul Rocket, at the desire of his master, seconded by the advice of Sir Marcus Combermere, undertook the office of keeping watch over Cosmo Dangerfield's movements, he did so with a full appreciation of the risk that he ran. While in that great philosopher's employment, he had necessarily become a sharer of some of the secrets on which the success of his philosophy depended; and had, indeed, been admitted deeper into the mysteries than any other acolyte of his age. That the Professor would resent his leaving his service as he had done, and cordially embracing the cause of Miss Stormount, as he had now

made up his mind to do, Paul had no doubt whatever; and his only surprise was, that he had suppressed his resentment so long. What would be the result of a meeting between them, he felt was quite uncertain; he had a lurking dread of his late master's skill and knowledge, and was by no means disposed to brave them unprepared. But his professional training gave him several advantages of which he was not slow to avail himself; and being fortified with a good store of provision in his pockets, and supplied with cash to purchase more, if wanted, he was ready to lie in ambush, or play the spy, all day long: keeping himself carefully out of Dangerfield's sight, but never relaxing his watch on all that he did.

The necessity of concealing his own person made it impossible for him to come to Emily's assistance in time; all he could do, he did. He ran across the fields, regardless of the snow; caught the coach

as it passed, and without requiring it to stop, jumped up behind like a monkey. The guard was too much diverted with his agility to take offence; and the other outside passengers, being only two sturdy farmers, had compassion on the boy's wet clothes, and lent him a thick great-coat, in which he was glad to disguise himself from any eye that might be too inquisitive for safety.

In some of Ernest's suffering hours lately, he had amused himself with his page's experiences, and had learned of him a code of private signals and communications, very useful in such conjuring as requires a confederate. Paul, as he crouched between two great hampers, in his frieze coat, recollected this, and felt sure his master would do the same. He had pencil and paper at hand, and soon prepared missives which would be unintelligible to any reader but Mr. Archdale.

"He will follow himself, if the breath

is in his body," he thought, "and he will never grudge money in such a cause." And wherever the coach stopped, and it was possible to do so, one of these cabalistic messages was left in somebody's keeping, backed by a shilling fee, and the assurance that Mr. Archdale would give another.

Coach hire and fees to messengers made some inroad on Paul's finances, but he contrived to keep the chase in sight to the inn where they had their meal, hanging about the stable first, and making friends with the hostler, and then repeating the performance in the bar. Here he heard that the gentleman and his daughter were going by the seven o'clock train, and had his dispatch prepared accordingly. Concealed behind a post, he saw the Professor put Emily into a fly, and, just before getting in himself, give an order to the driver. What it was he could not hear; but favoured by the darkness he jumped up at the back of the carriage, and soon saw

that they were going in a different direction from the one he had been led to expect. The place was all new to his experience, and when he judged it wiser to relinquish his perch, it required no little activity to follow the fly to its destination. Once there, however, he had no more difficulty, except to ascertain to what station the Professor was going.

"Can one get to London this way?" he asked a porter, and was informed that he could, only he would have to change and wait a certain time at one of the great junctions: accordingly Paul took a ticket to that junction, trusting to the chapter of accidents for getting further, as he had not quite half a crown left. Of this residue, another shilling went in leaving a message, and what to do without a fresh supply he could not clearly see.

"I must stop their running, somehow or other," he thought, "or they'll throw me out altogether." And the reflection

that Emily had recognized him, and was aware that he was following, strung his nerves to the pitch of daring all consequences, sooner than lose the advantage he had gained. He saw them alight, and had just time to station himself on the bridge, with a cord ready noosed for such a trick as had more than once brought him applause in the circus. The Professor, unwitting of the science so near at hand, allowed his foot to be caught. The consequences we have seen in his heavy fall, and the separation from his step-daughter: whom we have left all this while, as he left her, huddling her dog to her bosom, and not knowing whether to go on or turn back.

Her suspense was soon ended, by feeling an arm of protection against the pressure of the crowd, while a voice in her ear sounded like music.

"All right, Miss Emily; I'll take care of you and Coco."

The child's innocent faith had never

failed; she had believed what her friends told her, and it seemed quite natural that help should come. She gave up Coco without hesitation, and put her hand in Paul's, with a sense of security and comfort that compensated for the troubles of the journey. He hurried her back to the platform they had just quitted, and, unobserved by any one, gained the door of the station. The lights of the town gleamed brightly at a little distance; they were standing on the high-road, and as Paul looked up and down no vehicle was in sight.

"Miss Emily, can you walk a little way, do you think?" said he, cheerfully. "I dare say we shall find some house where you can rest, if you can hold out till then."

The fact was, though he did not tell her so, the vision of Cosmo Dangerfield returning in a state of exasperation to reclaim his companion, or telegraphing to have her stopped, convinced Paul that the first thing to be done was to hide her somewhere; and

though he knew nothing of the locality, he was sure there would be some inn where she might be sheltered, if only they could reach it in time. There was no return train for several hours, and Paul would gladly have remained at the station, had it been safe; but, besides the risk of being detained, he had seen as they passed the waiting-room that it was being locked up, and there was nothing for it but to find better quarters further on. Emily assured him she was not tired. Indeed, the relief of exercise and the joy of deliverance seemed to put fresh vigour into her limbs, as she stepped out on the hard, frosty road in perfect confidence that Paul knew where to go, and that they should soon come to a house, with a warm fire.

"Did they send you, Paul?" was her first question, when they had walked a little way. He was listening for the sound of the departing trains, and did not answer. "Did they send you, Paul?"

Then Paul explained that he had seen her put into the coach, and as he thought she did not like it, determined to follow, and help her to go back to Miss Granard.

"How very kind of you, Paul. Are we going back to her now?"

"We cannot start before morning, Miss Emily. Have you any money with you?"

"No, but I have some locked up in Adela's box."

"That won't help us much," was Paul's inward reflection, as he thought of his eighteenpence, and the impossibility of paying railway fares, or telegraphic messages, out of the surplus. But he hinted nothing of this to Emily, only talked cheerily about the good supper Coco would have presently, and thence diverged into stories about other dogs, of wonderful sagacity and unmatched cleverness, beguiling the way as best he could, while discovering it to be much longer than he had at first supposed. The wind, too, had risen,

and in spite of her warm cloak he felt the child shiver, and every minute made him more and more anxious to find a warm shelter for her head. No pursuit being attempted, though he looked back from time to time, almost expecting to hear a policeman summon him to stop, he began to revolve in his mind by what expedient he could obtain a supply of money with which to convey her home. Several schemes presented themselves to his fertile imagination, but all contained some insuperable difficulty in being carried out; and while still weighing two of these against each other, he was roused by a carriage rattling past him so suddenly, that the coachman shouted as he passed that he had better take care where he was going.

"It would be very nice to drive in that carriage," said Emily, "and here comes another—oh, and another. There must be a party somewhere."

So Paul perceived, and that they were

near the house, for they had reached the suburb of the town, full of detached residences, standing within gates, a pair of which had been thrown open for the ingress and egress of visitors and their equipages. Before he was aware, he had been driven with his charge to the shelter of some evergreens within the precincts, to avoid being run over by two carriages, each trying to get before the other. The wind was now blowing keenly, and some sharp sleet drove into their faces; making her cling to him for protection, with a gasping, "Oh, Paul—Paul!"

"Why don't you go on to the house?" shouted the coachman nearest to the two, supposing the young lady to be one of the guests, living near enough to walk to her evening's amusement. It really looked easier to go forward than to return, for more carriages were behind, and if only Emily could be sheltered under the portico for five minutes, while he asked his way

to the nearest inn, it would be something. So Paul pushed on to the portico.

"This way, if you please," cried a civil servant at the open door: and Emily, without knowing what was going to be done with her, was shown into a warm room full of ladies' cloaks and shawls, and the door closed behind her.

The careless maid who ought to have been on duty in that apartment had left it for a chat and a cup of tea on her own score. The tired child, after waiting a little while for some one to tell her what to do, sat down among the shawls and cloaks. As may easily be imagined, she was very soon fast asleep, with her head on the fur lining of one of the mantles; the distant sound of music and dancing feet mingling with her dreams.

She woke suddenly with a start, and sat up, not knowing where she was, or what had happened to her. But her hand was taken by one that was very soft and tender,

and a kind voice said, "Do not be frightened, my dear, but tell me who you are."

Emily looked up, and her senses becoming a little clearer, she perceived that an old lady was bending over her; such an old lady as she had sometimes seen in pictures, with lovely white hair, a sweet smile, and a gracious manner. So gracious, that the child was calmed unconsciously, and answered without hesitation.

"I am Emily Stormount, ma'am."

"And why does Emily Stormount go to sleep on my cloak, instead of going home to bed?" asked the white-haired stranger, sitting down by the little girl's side, without relinquishing her hand.

"I can't go home to bed till to-morrow morning. And the wind blew very cold, and the carriages crowded so, we had to come in to get out of the way; and the man put me in here."

"You did not come to the dance, then, my little woman?"

"No, but I thought it must be very nice and warm when I saw the lights in the windows. Please, ma'am, may I have Coco?"

"Cocoa, my dear? To drink, do you mean?" asked the old lady, somewhat surprised, as well she might be.

"No, ma'am, he is my dog, and Paul is carrying him for me. Paul is very kind; he never cares how long he carries him."

"And who is Paul?"

"I don't quite know who he is, but he is now Mr. Archdale's servant, and he is taking me home."

"If this is the way he takes you home, dear child, you will be a long time getting there. What is his master?"

"Mr. Ernest Archdale is an officer, and very often ill, and very kind to me."

"Ernest Archdale? Where did you see him?"

"At Sir Marcus Combermere's—and Mrs.

Archdale was there too. We live very near them, in Mrs. Keith's lodgings."

The old lady uttered an exclamation which Emily did not understand, and rang the bell hastily. On the appearance of a maid, she ordered a tray of refreshments from the supper-room to be brought, and also that the servant who attended on Miss Stormount should be sent to her directly.

"And tell your mistress that I shall be glad to speak to her as soon as she is at leisure."

The maid stared at Emily, but evidently knew that the old lady was not to be disobeyed, for she hurried away immediately. Paul, and the tray, and her mistress appeared almost simultaneously. The latter, somewhat startled by the unexpected summons, was beginning to ask anxiously if dear Mrs. Raymond felt unwell, but Mrs. Raymond's smile at once relieved her of that anxiety.

"You have given us a charming evening, full of pretty surprises, my dear Fanny, but you do not know, perhaps, that your house is haunted by fairies, and that Snowdrop, looking for her seven brothers, has been caught asleep in an old woman's fur cloak. Here is a dear, tired child for whom I have bespoken some supper, before taking her home with me. She is a friend of my daughter's, and so I have the first right in her, though I accept your hospitality so far."

The quick ear of Paul had caught the words, "my daughter," and the remembrance of a photograph in his master's dressing-case explained the matter at once. He was ready with answers to the questions put to him, as to his position in Ernest's service and the state of his health; but with regard to Miss Stormount he was more reserved. The young lady had got separated from her friends, and was put into the wrong train, he said, and he had made bold

to take what care of her he could, as he knew his master would wish him to do. He had meant to take her to the nearest inn for the night, and their coming into the house had been to avoid an accident.

"I am sure my friend Mrs. Donne is very glad you came in; this dear child is very young to be travelling at night in this way. As soon as she has finished her supper, if you will be good enough to ask for Mrs. Raymond's carriage, I will take you all home with me; and as your master is my dear grandson, I will answer for his giving leave."

"Pray go and get some supper yourself," said Mrs. Donne, who was coaxing Emily, and petting Coco, with a cordiality that testified to her regard for her old friend's wishes; and Paul, seeing both his charges so well provided for, was not at all sorry to obey. Though maintaining his discreet reserve, he contrived to throw out hints, which made a due impression on the

servants who heard them; and the report that a young heiress had been nearly run over, and had taken shelter at Mrs. Donne's, spread, as reports do, with wonderful rapidity, causing a sensation of curiosity and interest which the hostess had some difficulty in satisfying. All she knew was that the child had a striking countenance, and looked much too delicate to be travelling by night. It was a mysterious story altogether, but her dear old friend had taken it all into her own hands, and she would be sure to do what was best. They would hear more, no doubt, when the poor child was sufficiently rested to explain.

That the little wanderer needed rest, and must not be harassed with questions, was but too plain to the benevolent old lady who had carried her off. She put her arm round her in the carriage, and let her weary head lie on her shoulder; while Coco, after a little hesitation, took up his place on her lap, finding the fur cloak as much to his

taste as his young mistress had done. Fortunately, they had not far to go.

Mrs. Raymond lived in what could truly be called a cottage, for it was as small as a lady's house could well be, her carriage being only a hired fly, and her establishment limited to one maid. A maid of marvellous energy and cleverness, never so happy as when doing the work of four, and knowing that her two hands were worth their eight.

To this invaluable retainer Mrs. Raymond addressed herself as soon as she appeared at the door.

"Come here, Bennet; I have a present for you."

Paul opened the carriage door, and Bennet stepped out smiling, quite ready to be agreeably surprised.

"Here is a wandering princess come to the old fairy's hut in the woods, Bennet, and she is to be put into a warm bed and dream of fairyland till morning. And here is the identical dog that came out of the

nutshell, and *he* is to be put to bed too, in her room; and there is one of her six wonderful servants, who is also to be made much of, though which of them he will turn out to be I cannot say. They all three came off the Christmas-tree on purpose for us, so we must prize them accordingly."

Bennet knew her lady well enough to accept all this as a most charming increase of property, congratulated her on being so fortunate, and helped out Emily and Coco with most respectful looks of welcome. The intelligence that the young lady had no luggage, but was to be provided with what was necessary, produced only a "Certainly, ma'am;" and Paul was requested to follow as readily as if there had been a servants' hall in which to entertain him, instead of the tiny kitchen, opposite the parlour, where she had been getting up her mistress's lace and cambric, by way of passing the evening.

"You will find a fire there," she said

cheerfully, "only please excuse the table being covered. I will come and clear it directly, and see about your bed. You won't mind roughing it for one night, I dare say."

If this were roughing it, Paul wondered what smoothness would be. Certainly, there was no roughness for Emily, who was allowed to look about her in the exquisite little parlour; which was more like an emporium of fine arts, than an ordinary place to live in, with its carved wood and delicate china, choice pictures, and filigree ornaments of the good old workmen, who wrought as artists, not as traders. The paper, the curtains, the chintz, were all in harmony, and in the most perfect taste; and a delicate odour pervaded the atmosphere, which might have been from freshly plucked roses, but was really the product of the distiller's cunning. A small clear fire burned in the grate, and Mrs. Raymond's easy-chair and work-basket were

ready on one side. Before anything could be suggested, a tempting seat had been placed near it for the stranger, and Coco was invited to the snowy hearthrug, which looked as if no coals or smoke ever came near it, and on which he curled himself as if it was no more than his due. A small, shaded lamp was lighted, and then Bennet vanished to make the needful preparations elsewhere, for they owned no such luxury as a spare room.

Mrs. Raymond threw off her cloak, sat down in her armchair, and drew Emily into the seat beside her. "Well, little Snowdrop," she said, seeing the child's earnest eyes fixed upon her face, "what do you think of the old fairy's hut?"

"It is very pretty, though it is so small," said Emily, "and you are very kind. Everybody is kind in England."

"Indeed? I have found it otherwise, Snowdrop: though kindness has not been wanting, either. But small as the hut is,

there is always room for a friend; fairies take care of that, as you will find."

"Fairies are not real," said Emily, shaking her head; "they are not like spirits."

"What do you know about spirits, little maiden? You are almost a sprite yourself, appearing in people's rooms at night when they do not expect you."

"Oh, I hope not. Spirits are unkind and cruel; they hate dogs and birds. I never had a dog to pet, till I went away from home, because the spirits did not like them."

Mrs. Raymond's fingers stole along the child's wrist to feel her pulse.

"She is not feverish," she thought, "or I should fancy she was light-headed. No, her manner is too natural for any delusion. There is some strange story connected with this, and she may be easier if she tells me all."

So, carefully suppressing any signs of surprise, she encouraged her young guest to be

communicative; and Emily, in her quiet, matter-of-fact style of narrative, told a great deal without intending or knowing it. She gave her little history, as we have already traced it; but she added some details of what had gone before which deeply moved her listener. When Emily was asleep in the bed which Bennet had contrived for her in her own room, Mrs. Raymond confided to her attendant the story she had just heard; anxious to see what she thought of it. Bennet nodded her head in evident satisfaction. The boy had told just the same tale, and how he had followed to save her from her stepfather's hands; and he had almost tears in his eyes when he said he would have followed them through fire and water sooner than not at all, only it would soon have been difficult, for his money was just out. "And I made bold, ma'am, knowing you would wish it, to hand him over some, that he may telegraph to his master, or the lady, the first

thing in the morning," added Bennet. "I told him I did not think you would approve of the young lady going off with him by the early train, and that no doubt the lady who has charge of Miss Stormount would come and fetch her."

"You are right, Bennet, as you generally are. We shall not give up our wanderer to any but the lawful hands. By the way, what is your opinion of this lad whom the dear child seems to trust so completely? Is he trustworthy, or not?"

"Well, ma'am, I asked that question of myself just now, and I could not help thinking that if he had not been Mr. Ernest would not have taken to him, as he seems to have done."

"Ah, Bennet, Mr. Ernest can do no wrong, and make no mistakes, in your opinion."

"Not quite that, ma'am. I have known him make mistakes, and may know him make more; but he is one that you couldn't

impose on twice, and if he trusts this lad, I think I should."

Paul was commissioned to send the telegram in the morning, and went out. His breakfast waited long for his return, but waited in vain.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIL.

THE shock of the sudden news—the more sudden, that there had been mention of improvement in the last accounts—that Mrs. Dangerfield was gone, and that her guardianship had begun at the moment when her charge was missing, seemed powerfully to affect Adela Granard's nerves, already sufficiently tried by recent suffering. The agony of self-reproach for carelessness, and the dread of what it might lead to, could only be allayed by hastening in pursuit; and her friends, though anxious on her own account, sympathized too much not to speed her on her way. Nothing would induce Sir Marcus Combermere to

let her go without him; and a hint to his daughter made her dutifully suppress all objection. His carriage, servants, purse, and time were all at her disposal; moreover, he had a duty to perform to his little patient, who had thus been spirited away from his care. Ernest Archdale's offer to accompany them was at first peremptorily rejected; but after a private conference on the subject, Sir Marcus changed his mind, and consented that he should go, at any rate, as far as they could drive, and return in the carriage.

"I will see he does nothing foolish," he said to Mrs. Archdale, who smiled acquiescence, but did not feel at all sure that he was not promising more than he could perform. Cecilia, standing near, expressed nothing but sympathy with Miss Granard, and resentment on Emily's behalf. Sympathy was, indeed, the general sentiment. Mr. Bourne volunteered to look after the ladies in his host's absence; and forgot to

be affronted because he went at all. The Archdeacon, finding Sir Marcus bent on going, said nothing about his own plans. He left them to arrange theirs while he strode home to pack his bag and get ready for the next up-train. With all this, it seemed that Emily's recovery must be a matter of course. As soon as the carriage, with Charles on the box beside the coachman, drove from the door, those left gave audible utterance to their doubts and fears.

"He has got too good a start, that Professor man; they'll never catch him," said Mr. Bourne, gloomily: "but it's no use saying so."

"Then why do you say it?" thought Kate, though she kept the angry words back, for it would not do to quarrel now her father was gone. "If I could have foreseen being left like this by papa, what should I have done?—and yet I cannot grudge him to Adela. Oh dear, how ill she looked! I wish they were all safe home again!"

Had she read her father's thoughts, she would have seen he was wishing the same thing: but, as the journey must be taken, his chief care was to make it as easy as possible for his two companions. Adela made him uneasy. He could see how strenuous were the efforts she made to keep herself calm, while her head was throbbing and her cheeks were burning; every fibre of her frame seemed ready to quiver. To beguile the way, and divert her thoughts, if possible, he drew Archdale into conversation; and the latter, discerning the motive, talked of everything that he hoped would interest her, and succeeded, sometimes, in making her forget. It was not much that either could do in the way of kindness, but all in their power they did, and she felt it to her heart's core.

Whether his mother was right, and he was doing a foolish thing in spite of Sir Marcus's promise, is not for us to decide; but of this we may be assured, that all his

sympathy, all his indignation, all his fear for the innocent cause of her anxiety, did not prevent the invalid lieutenant from a sense of enjoyment which he had not known for many a day. To sit opposite to one so lovely and interesting as Adela Granard, sharing her troubles, helping her through her difficulties, knowing himself to be of use, and a support instead of an incumbrance, was a sensation sweet enough to have warned him of its danger, had he thought of himself at all. Unselfish by nature, it was a positive relief to lay aside the invalid, and be occupied for other people. Though never a moment without pain or discomfort, he hid both with gallant endeavour; and, indeed, was scarcely sensible of either in the presence of Adela.

Sir Marcus, whose keen eye nothing escaped, encouraged him in his pretence of being free from pain; even looked as if he believed it.

"Let him alone, my dear," he said, when

Ernest had insisted on alighting at an inn, to make inquiries, which Adela thought Charles could have made with less risk; "nothing is so wholesome for him, poor fellow, as fancying he is useful. I brought him as much for his own sake as ours; anything is good that gives him a motive for exertion."

Adela thought that this was holding his services rather cheap, but did not say so. He came back, shaking his head with an air of disappointment. She was beginning to thank him, when a helper in a fur cap came up to the carriage, and, with a rough kind of salute, asked, in the broad dialect of those parts, if one of the gentlemen was Mr. Archdale. Yes—here he was; what news? As to news the helper could say nothing; only he had a bit of a note here to hand to him, and the young chap said he was to have a shilling for it.

"Penny post would be an improvement here, Archdale, wouldn't it?" said Sir

Marcus, as Ernest, with evident triumph, paid the money; receiving, in return, a dirty wisp of paper, none the fresher for having been kept, for safety, in the fur cap of the messenger.

"It's all right, Sir Marcus," he replied, after puzzling over this for some minutes. "They passed this way by the coach, and he has seen the little lady, and she seems quite quiet, hugging Coco."

"Coco will be her best friend, next to Paul himself, I have a notion. Anyhow, it was a good thought of the lad's to write; it shows he is in earnest."

Adela's eyes shone with thankfulness. In fact, the whole party were relieved of a secret dread, lest terror and surprise should have brought on one of poor Emily's nervous attacks. Now that she must soon know a friend was at hand, there was every hope she would hold out till they could reach her.

Sir Marcus had Bradshaw at his fingers'

ends, and was not long in discovering that it was almost impossible for them, in the state of the roads, to reach the town in time for the seven o'clock up-train; by which train he expected the Professor meant to reach London. However, he had additional horses put to the carriage, and did all in his power to achieve the impossible—so that Adela was supported by the hope of being in time till they reached the inn where the coach put up. Here, on inquiry, they learned that no gentleman and child had entered the premises. After some little delay, it was found they had driven to the Royal Hotel. Thither they went accordingly, and Ernest picked up another cypher, confirming the baronet's opinion. The Professor had ordered a fly for the station, to catch the seven p.m. train.

It was now long past that hour, and Sir Marcus needed but one look at his fair companion to decide him on taking prompt measures.

"We can do nothing more for an hour or two," he said, "so I see no reason why we should starve. Archdale, my good fellow, order something as soon as you can—soup, and a cutlet, and a bottle of sherry, and some tea—then we shall please all tastes; and you, Miss Granard, be so good as to sit down by the fire, and rest yourself till dinner is ready. If you can get a little nap, all the better."

He knew well enough that sleep was to her simply impossible, while her temples beat like hammers, and her feet were cold as ice. To keep her quiet was his real object, while he took Charles aside for a confidential explanation.

"Your young lady, my good fellow, is done up. She ought not to go a step further."

"I was just thinking so myself, Sir Marcus."

"She has been stunned by the suddenness of the whole thing, you see, telegram

and all. She will be quite ill if she goes on."

"It's no wonder to me, Sir Marcus, begging your pardon—knowing, as I know, all she went through. I've been afraid some mischief would come of it, all along."

"We'll stop the mischief, if we can. Look here, Charles. If she can get a good long sleep, she will wake up much better. I mean her to stay here to-night and take something I shall prescribe; and the people of the house are respectable and intelligent, and will take care to obey my orders. You must remain too, to keep watch over her; and if she sleeps till the middle of to-morrow, all the better. Mr. Archdale will be at hand, and I shall telegraph to him as soon as I have any news of Miss Emily. I hope to stop them at Dover by going up to-night by the eleven train."

"You must go, then, Sir Marcus?" said Charles, ruefully. For, in his opinion, Adela was of more consequence than her ward.

"Why, you don't think your young lady would sleep much to-night, if no one went after the child, do you?—and of the four of us, I am the only one that can go. I shall give Mr. Archdale instructions what to do: and you must look after him, and see he has a good fire, for it has been rather a risk his coming at all."

Charles bowed, smiling a little to himself; for he had his own opinion as to the secret of Ernest's sudden energy. He promised the young gentleman should want nothing that he could do for him; and Sir Marcus, having settled this point, went to prepare Adela for what he knew would be a trial—the necessity of being left behind.

He waited till the meal had been served, and he had seen her futile attempts to partake of it. When the cloth was removed, and she began to look at her watch, as if she thought it was time to dress for the journey, he drew his chair by the side of hers, and took her by the hand.

"You are not going any further to-night, my dear. Everything is arranged, and, I undertake it all. You are ill, and quite unable to do anything but just obey me as your doctor, and trust me as your friend."

He had prepared himself for remonstrance, but perceived that his decision was an immense relief. For the last hour Adela had been thinking of the noise of the train, and how she should ever bear it. Her powers of exertion had so completely collapsed, that sorrow and anxiety and self-reproach, the three goads which had harassed her during the tedious drive, had lost their poignancy; pain and oppression had obtained such complete mastery. She yielded without a struggle, and scarcely seemed to understand what the others were arranging. To lay her head on a pillow, and hear nothing, was all she could wish for, or think about.

And, thanks to her doctor's prescription,

she did at last obtain some sleep, though not of a refreshing kind. It was a night of continual struggle with fearful dreams; in which, as was only natural, Emily bore her part, and Emily's enemies, the spirits. She woke at last, repeating in her anguish, "More with us than with them"— and found it was morning, and a civil chambermaid coming in with a welcome cup of tea. After drinking it she fell asleep again, and did not wake till so late in the day, that a shaded lamp was burning on the table, by which the shadow of a seated figure was thrown on the opposite wall. As she turned to look at it, the figure rose, and a soft, light hand was laid on her temples; such a touch as she had not felt since she lost her mother. A sweet, low voice, with an accent in it that reminded her of foreign friends, asked if she would like something to drink; and a cup was offered to her lips, pleasant and refreshing both to smell and taste. She

drank, and the same voice spoke to some one else in the room, observing that she would soon feel better.

She did feel better already: and, recollecting why she was there, and what had happened before, roused herself to look at her watch, and ask if there were any news.

"Yes, my dear," said the sweet voice, "the best of news. Your child is safe, only waiting till you are well enough to see her; and an old woman has come to see that you are taken care of yourself, until you are able to take care of other people."

"Emily is here? Oh, thank God for His mercy! Did Sir Marcus find her? Is he come back?"

"Nobody found her but me; and I found her asleep on my fur cloak, like a little princess in the fairy tales. Now, you are too polite to ask who I am, so I must introduce myself as Ernest's granny. You

know my daughter, Mrs. Archdale, and I know you by her letters; and I owe the spirits and the conjurors a good turn for helping us to become acquainted."

There was no resisting the winning manner. Though still confused and wandering, Adela felt a strange pleasure mingle with her pain, and putting the delicate hand to her lips, endeavoured to express her thanks. She had been dreaming that she had no friends left—every one she loved or knew was gone, and her own fault had driven them away. It was, indeed, a glad awakening to find her carelessness repaired, and another kind friend come to her help.

"But my poor child—I must see her; I have to break sad news. Has Mr. Archdale told you her history?"

"I know some of it, my dear, and it has made my old blood boil, I can tell you, as if I were five and twenty. But I cannot help thinking it will be safer to keep the sorrowful news till you are at home. She

has been so startled and shaken, poor little thing, that she is hardly in a state to bear a blow. We will prepare her for it by degrees; and while I go down to her now, suppose you dream that Bennet is your maid, and let her do for you as she does for me?"

It would be worth while to dream oftener, if dreams in general had the comfortable reality about them which Bennet's presence implied. The luxury of such an attendant was one that Adela Granard had not enjoyed for many a long day; if, indeed, she had ever met with one so deft of hand, and so clever in perceiving just what to do and what to leave undone. While assisting the young lady to dress, she quietly told her all she wanted to know; how Miss Stormount had been discovered at Mrs. Donne's, and how the page, Paul, had set off in the morning to telegraph of her safety, and had not been seen since. How Mr. Ernest (as she always called him) found out where she

was, Bennet was not quite clear. It was explained to Adela afterwards.

The story of the gentleman and the child, and all the questions asked about them, had, of course, spread through the town; and, perhaps, a rumour may have been afloat that any news about them would be rewarded. At any rate, Ernest received a visit in the morning from the driver of the fly that conveyed the Professor to the station, avowedly to restore a handkerchief that the young lady had dropped, but with the purpose also of informing him that the fare had not gone by the seven up-train at all; he had driven them to the Midland, "t'other side of the town." As this was important information, it met with due reward, and after consulting Charles, the young officer decided to follow the indicated route. He caught a train that changed for London where the evening one had done, and on making inquiry there, heard a strange tale—how a gentleman had

met with an accident, and got separated from his daughter, and went on, thinking she was in another carriage; but finding she had been left behind, had telegraphed that she was to wait for his return. The gentleman had come back that morning to fetch her, but no one knew where she was, nor had she been seen since the night before, and the poor father was in a terrible taking. It was supposed he had gone to a magistrate's, to get help from the police.

Finding no message from Paul, and having time to spare, Ernest took the opportunity of surprising his grandmother with a visit, little expecting the surprise that awaited him at her house. Bennet did not think it necessary to explain how strongly her mistress's feelings were wrought upon by the glowing description the young gentleman gave of Miss Stormount's guardian—but Mrs. Raymond had decided to bring the child back to Miss Granard herself, rather than send her alone with Mr.

Archdale; and it was evident, by her own showing, that Bennet had been charmed to have to pack and arrange against time, and to find plenty to do for them all as soon as she arrived. At the risk of making mortal enemies in the Royal Hotel, she had tidied the rooms, and re-modelled the fires, and prepared all sorts of things over a spirit lamp, which she refused to trust to any of the kitchen officials; and only regretted that she could not see personally to the cooking of the dinner, as she was sure nobody knew exactly what her mistress liked but herself.

Adela was scarcely dressed, when Emily came to her door, petitioning for admission; and directly she saw her, the young guardian felt Mrs. Raymond's advice was judicious. Folding her arms round the child, and feeling how her slight frame quivered with agitation, she silently vowed that come what might, if only power were given, her first duty on earth would be to

that persecuted orphan. To make her happy, to bring her up in the fear of God, to teach her the right use of the means put into her hands, to deliver her brain and nerves from the terrors which had been so cruelly excited—this, with Heaven's help, should be the work of her life, so long as it was needed; and as she pressed her lips on Emily's forehead to seal the vow, her tears dropped on her face.

"Are you crying?" asked Emily, anxiously. "Do you think mamma will be sorry I did not go?"

"No, dear; it was her wish that you should be with me."

"Will he be unkind to her about it?"

"Our Father in Heaven will take care of her, Emily. He keeps watch over her, as He does over us. We have only to trust Him, and nothing can make us afraid."

It was the simple truth she had from the first endeavoured to stamp on the excited brain, and which had already proved so

efficacious. Emily was silent for some minutes, revolving some point in her mind, which at last found utterance in a question. "Will He take care of Paul, too?"

"If Paul trusts in Him, we know He will."

"But Paul says he knows nothing about it; that no one ever taught him. And now he is lost, too, and nobody is going to look for him."

"Yes, indeed, my Snowdrop," said Mrs. Raymond, who had followed her, "we all mean to look for Paul; and if he has never been taught that his Father knows how to take care of him, he will learn it. I am an old woman now, my dear, but I was much younger than either Paul or you when I knew what it was to have no home, and to lose what seemed to be my only friend."

"Oh, tell me all about it—tell me your story!" said Emily, eagerly. But the old lady shook her head.

"Some day, when Miss Granard brings

you to pay me a visit, as I hope she will, you shall hear my adventures, as far as they will interest you. And meanwhile, do not forget that you have seen an instance of the wonderful way in which our Father takes care of us—for here I am to tell the tale, and your troubles are nothing to mine."

She had done good service by saying this, for it took Emily completely out of herself: and, her imagination being set to work, she thought of little else all the evening but what Mrs. Raymond's adventures could have been; hoping that the talked-of visit would be paid before very long.

There was another whose eyes brightened when such a scheme was talked of. Ernest had always been his grandmother's favourite, and to her indulgence he would sometimes confide matters that he shrank from discussing with his mother. She knew all about Cairngorm, and Miss Wilmot, and was now only waiting for him to begin, to throw herself heartily into the whole con-

cern. But finding him silent, she took the opportunity, when they were alone for a few minutes, to ask how his affairs were progressing.

"I hear you met accidentally—is there anything for me to hear?"

He looked up with a smile. "Accidentally, indeed! That snow-drift was a blessed invention. Is she not lovely, granny?"

The old lady raised her eyebrows; she knew now where she was.

"It is no longer Rosalind, then, my gentle Montague? I never saw the other, but I cannot wonder if you admire so fair a creature as this. How long have you known her?"

"If we measure by time, granny, I am afraid it will seem a little while; but I feel as if I had known her half my life. At least, as if the rest were of very little account."

"Has it gone so far as this, my poor boy? And what does *she* feel, or think?"

"Dear granny, how should I know? I have said and done nothing to raise the question. How can I? You see what I am; and in how unfit a state to win any one——"

"You have yet to learn that we women are sometimes as much won by weakness and suffering, as by gallantry and strength?"

"Oh, I know you are ministering angels —none better; but a man must feel he has something to offer besides his own discomforts; and I have very little more. Granny, what will you say to my leaving the army for a house of business?"

She was shocked; he saw that. But she would not grieve him.

"Does your mother approve, my child?" she said with a sigh.

"Dear mother winces, as you do; but necessity admits no sentiment. I must leave my sword with you till I can claim it again, like the old marquis you used to make me read about."

"And there is no other course for you? Nothing but a desk and a ledger?"

"Nothing; unless I could find the lost dowry, granny." He said this to make her smile; but the hand that was stroking his hair, stopped short, and pressed his head with sudden vehemence.

"Ernest, that dream returned to me last night! Often as you have laughed at the old woman's story, the day will yet come—I feel it—when you will acknowledge it was all true. Oh, how I have prayed that I might see it before I die! But if I never do, you will. All will be yours, all—to win Juliet, or Rosalind, whichsoever of them may then be the ascendant star."

"You dearest of women! you would give away all that you have, as well as all you dream about. I will be bound you saw the dowry in a silver casket, or steel-clamped box, brimming over with gold pieces and pearls, and you said to yourself, 'Now this time I know I am awake,' and then you awoke, and, behold, it was a dream."

"As others have done before me," said Mrs. Raymond, passing from the subject. It agitated her more than her grandson supposed.

Sir Marcus was expected to return by a late train, and Bennet tried very hard to make everybody go to bed, and leave her and Charles (whom she admitted to have some common sense) to see that all was comfortable for him. But as Ernest persisted in sitting up, she could only expend her goodwill upon the young ladies and Coco, whose affections would have been in danger had he been a man, instead of a dog. The gentle attentions of the old lady, to whom she was now a peculiar object of interest, were no less soothing to Adela; and she was conscious of an exquisite pleasure in seeing that she found favour in the eyes of one so dear to Ernest. With his mother, she had felt constraint and doubt; but Emily's fairy hostess had a face and manner that could not deceive; and

the magic of her caressing touch seemed for the moment to lull that gnawing at the heart, which only the orphan knows. The kind old lady could not sleep till she had seen both wanderers in bed, and exacted a renewal of the promise that they would come and see her some day, and hear the old woman's story.

"And if, when you do, you can find me a conjuror who can solve my riddle, all I can say is, I shall be happy to believe in him."

CHAPTER V.

UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENTS.

Sir Marcus was back. The last day of the holidays had come; and Kate Combermere went about her household duties with a cloud on her spirits, as meekly as if she were going to school herself—as perhaps she was. The last two days, since the other guests had departed, had been so happy in the enjoyment of Lewis's companionship, so free from cares and interruptions, that it was all the harder to face the morrow's blank, and think how long it would be till Easter. Lewis himself was more silent than usual, and lounged in and out of the deserted rooms, with his hands in his pockets, as if he could settle nowhere. At

last he could bear it no longer, and summoned Kate to come out for a walk, "while it was fine."

It had rained all night, and was not exactly fine then; the mists were lying low in the valleys, and the country looked, as Lewis disrespectfully remarked, like Dickens's benevolent patriarch, after his hair was cut short. But Kate would have done anything to please him; and Dandie, who had been much discomfited by symptoms of packing, to which he had a strong aversion, woke up from a dissatisfied slumber into somewhat obtrusive activity, and seconded the motion with a round of applause. Umbrellas and proof-armour being hastily assumed, the friends started for their last walk, choosing the high-road because they had no choice—it was the only one passable.

"Well, Kate," was Lewis's first remark, when they had gone some little way in silence, "if all your visitors were as sorry

to go as I am, you are in for a voluminous correspondence. I have been studying my letter of thanks half the morning; and, as Mr. Collins would say, you may expect it in a day or two."

"So long as you do write, I'll forgive you the thanks. I had quite enough with good Mrs. Bourne's."

"Dear kind soul! One had need to be thoroughly sweet-tempered to live with her."

"One had need to be sweet-tempered anywhere, but one isn't: judging by those around her."

"Oh, I do not defend old Bourne. I have been wondering how he and Archdale will hit it off, when it comes to a difference of opinion."

"It would be difficult to quarrel with Ernest."

"So difficult, that I have given it up: though I have been within an ace of trying."

"Why, what has he done?"

"Done? That is the very thing. Where any man in his senses would do a great deal, he does nothing. I never saw a fellow so blind to his own opportunities."

"He has not been fit to work before, remember. I think the move he has made is very much to his credit, for I am sure it went against him, poor fellow."

"Oh, you pity him, do you? Well, it may be a nuisance to work under old Bourne, but there might be compensation there if he chose to have it."

"It will be compensation, if he adds to his mother's income."

"You mercenary being, is that all you think of? Can anybody, gifted with the eyesight of an owl in the daytime, help seeing, when those two are together, what one of them is throwing away?"

"He and his mother, do you mean?" asked Kate, knowing perfectly well that he meant nothing of the kind.

"His mother? nonsense. I mean the poor, sweet girl who evidently worships him: and whom, as far as I can see, he does not treat as she deserves!"

"Perhaps I am short-sighted, but, as far as I can see, I really think he does. You have taken the lead in gossiping about our neighbours, recollect. What a state this road is in!"

"It is not gossip, it is plain fact," said Lewis, striding ankle deep through water, without being the least aware of it. "He has won her regard, no matter whether he meant it or not; and now he chooses to be coldly civil, and hug his own offended dignity on account of some thoughtlessness on her part, such as any pretty girl might be guilty of, under circumstances. I suppose he never knew the facts; and it is just one of those cases where people may be miserable all their lives, just for want of an explanation."

"But what is to hinder an explanation, if there can be one?"

"Just put yourself in her place, Kate. Not as you actually are, always sensible and right-judging——"

"I would curtsy, sir, but for the puddles," interrupted Kate.

"But as she was then; ignorant of the world, flattered, and carried away with high spirits and novelty. She does a thing she is sorry for—it was not a crime, when all is said and done—but of course it was not pleasant for him to hear she had been seen in his rival's four-in-hand, while he was laid up with his fall. Now, if he knew the whole story—how unhappy she was all the time, though she did not know how much he was hurt—how she had to hide her misery from the curious eyes round her, for fear of their remarks, and was ashamed to stand out, because she felt it all so much—if he knew all this, which it is impossible for her to tell him, do you suppose it would not all come right between them directly? He must be much more stiff-necked than I

think him, if he stood on his dignity afterwards."

"How came you to know all this, Lewis?"

"Now, then, what are the gossips going to say about that? She is one of those innocent, open-hearted creatures that expand to kindness as flowers to the sun; and when I was clumsy enough to say that I understood and was sorry for her, instead of being affronted, as some girls would have been, and spiting me for my awkwardness, she took me into her confidence in the most engaging way—and when she had relieved her heart, I could only offer to help her, if possible. I declare, she looked upon me at the time as she might look upon the Archdeacon: whom, by the way, she does not at all admire. Was there any harm in all that?"

"None in the world. Are you not betraying her confidence by telling me?"

"I should be, if I had not assured her that you would be her best adviser. She

said she only wished you knew all, but she was a little afraid of you."

Miss Combermere only smiled. She asked how he proposed to be of any use in so delicate a matter.

"Well, I tried it on with Archdale before he went; but he was so taken up with his journeys, and his change of professions, and the mystery of his Goblin Page, in whom I simply do not believe, that there was no making him attend. Perhaps he guessed what I wanted, and (very naturally) wished me to mind my own business. However, I have not done with him. He will have to settle in London, and I shall get an exeat, like the boys, and run up some Saturday till Monday."

"I thought you never liked to do that," said Kate, rather dismayed by the suggestion.

"I do not, as a rule. When I mentioned it, Miss Wilmot brightened up so much, I could not be so ungracious as not say I

would call at Mr. Bourne's. She reminded me of it as she said good-bye."

"Her spirits did not seem to require much cheering. Perhaps it was all your doing that she laughed and chattered the whole evening."

"You do not know how low she was that day the child was stolen, and we were all in an uproar. Archdale, it seems, hardly noticed her at all, though he knew how she had been frightened; and went off in the carriage without a word or a look to comfort her. So I proposed starting for a good walk among the hills; we had talked of it before, and it did her all the good in the world. You saw how much better she was: and so I repeated the remedy every day."

Kate had seen, indeed, that Cecilia made a point of showing indifference about Ernest, both during his absence and after his return; her pleasant looks and attentive ears being reserved for Lewis. She felt

perplexed and saddened, but durst not ask herself why.

"Tell me what you think, Kate," he went on, after a pause. "Surely one ought not to see so sweet a life made wretched for want of a few friendly words?"

"If I thought a few friendly words would make them both happy, I should be as ready to speak them as you are; but, my dear fellow-gossip (you began it, remember), before you let your benevolence run away with you, had you not better be certain that it is not too late? Are you sure our friend Ernest has any heart left to give?"

"If he has not—but I don't believe it. I know of whom you are thinking: but it no more follows from his being ready to help her about the child, than from my fishing her out of the snow. I only wonder your gossiping propensity has not fastened upon me!"

His laugh did her good; for, at any rate, there was no consciousness in it, and she

was wise enough not to make any attempt at warning him of danger. The conversation turned on other subjects, and she tried to forget her uneasiness: or, at least, to think it unfounded.

Breakfast, taken early the next morning, was over when the letters arrived. Lewis Frankland's eyes at once detected a delicate handwriting he had learned to distinguish, among a pile that fell to Kate's share. Sir Marcus took his from the room.

"Mr. Collins has kept his word, I am sure," he said. "There must be a letter of thanks among all these. Do let me hear one."

She had intended reserving them till he was gone, as only one precious quarter of an hour remained; but, yielding to his wish, she opened Miss Wilmot's, and read it aloud.

"My dear Miss Combermere,

"I cannot allow any one else to speak for me, not even Mrs. Bourne, who

can speak so well for everybody; and though she will have told you all that is worth your knowing, I must steal a few minutes of that time which is so largely drawn upon, to assure you I shall never forget all the kindness shown to me in your delightful house. I shall often and often long to be back again in the warm, bright rooms, watching the snow, and hearing the wind, remembering how equal your resources were to every emergency, and that, the rougher matters looked without, the smoother they would be within. Our journey was painfully devoid of incident; Miss Medlicott was nearly left behind at the refreshment station; and Mr. Bourne, for full twenty minutes, believed he had lost the tickets; both proving false alarms. There was no snow-drift to stop us at hospitable gates, and no gallant deliverer to dig us out if there had been. I am afraid Mr. Frankland will have a great deal to answer for, as I have become slightly insane

on the subject of hills, and have invested in a map of London that I may know where to find them. At present I am divided between the Holborn and the Notting ranges, as a preparation for the Alpine heights of Primrose and Hampstead. Any hints about guides, outfit, and distances will be gratefully acknowledged."

"That is all meant for you, Lewis, so you will have to answer it. The rest is a pretty little speech for my father; but he must read it afterwards, or you will miss your train."

"Give it to me; I will read it to him on the way," said Lewis; "it will amuse me through my dull journey. You shall have it again, if you want it."

And, true to his word, he returned it in a couple of days, with a facetious parody of an Alpine Club paper, describing an imaginary ascent of Holborn Hill, with full instructions to the uninitiated, which Kate

laughed over first, and about which she very nearly cried when she forwarded it to Cecilia Wilmot.

"Well, my love," said Sir Marcus, thinking how quiet the house was after their large party, "you managed to keep them from quarrelling, you see, after all."

She smiled, because he was watching her; and said he was always right, and she should never be anxious on that score again.

"But oh!" she thought, when she could do so freely, "they might all have quarrelled and welcome, sooner than it should have come to this."

Her best resource at this time was her intercourse with Keith's lodgings, to which Miss Granard had got back. Between her own and Emily's affairs, Adela had more business letters to read and write than she could well have got through, without the help of Comber Court. Sir Marcus was always at her service, and the most difficult

parts of the correspondence were generally accomplished in his study; while it became so natural for Kate to make her friend's dwelling the object of her constitutional walk, that Dandie was aggrieved when she attempted to go anywhere else.

The interest of Dandie's visits, the little bustle that ensued of persuading Coco to go into retirement, that his feelings might not be lacerated by seeing his little mistress devote herself to another—the delight of being entreated for biscuit with all the eloquence of begging paw and wooing tail—were of more value to Emily than Dandie knew. Her state was far from satisfactory, though Sir Marcus was hopeful for the future, and encouraged patience and ingenuity in working out the cure. She had borne the revelation of her mother's death better than was expected, receiving with docility all the consolations her friends could suggest, and obeying every word or look of Adela's, with an eagerness that

showed how she dwelt upon the last injunction she had heard from that mother's lips. But her nights were sometimes terrible. Many an hour did her guardian hear the church clock strike, while she sat by the poor child's bed, holding her hand as she lay awake, or watching for one of those starts from harrowing dreams, which were worse than sleeplessness. Adela's beauty began to look a little worn.

"You will have to keep a nurse and a secretary, if this goes on," said Miss Combermere, when she found her friend, after one of these vigils, sitting with her head on her hand, and a pile of letters at her elbow. "I asked Charles if you were very busy, and he looked 'volumes,' as the people say—binding, advertisements, and all; and no wonder. Where is Emily?"

"The Archdeacon has taken her out for a walk. He only returned yesterday, and I have had a lecture already about exercise and occupation."

"Another! This looks like a deliberate plan of annoyance."

"It means more than that, I am afraid," sighed Miss Granard. "Listen:—

"'The guardian of Miss Emily Stormount is recommended to be careful how she enters into the responsibilities of a property on which there may be serious claims. Circumstances known only to the present writer, but deserving earnest consideration, might make Miss Granard's position anything but desirable. Should further elucidation be desired, a letter, containing five shillings for expenses, may be addressed to X. L., care of Messrs. Stubbs, Chemists, Holborn.'"

"Humph!" said Kate, "I can understand that better. It is worth while to worry people, if they will send you five shillings in return."

"Now, then, look at this from my old friend Miss Joseph. And, putting the three together, tell me if there is not some connection between them?"

Miss Joseph had already written several times, giving the mournful details that she knew would be valued; but it was the first time she had mentioned her own proceedings. "You see by my address, dear Adela, that I am lodging at the Museum, having at last come to terms with Dr. Thaddeus, who wanted to have everything his own way, and put me on the same floor with the snakes and lizards. I have a decent bedroom at the top of the house, quite out of their reach; and here my headquarters will be for the present, to which I can return after any necessary journeys. You are very good to invite me, and I shall look forward to such a visit as a reward; but I have work to do first. It is time you knew that Mrs. Dangerfield gave me the key of her desk, telling me it contained a packet of papers, which were to be delivered to you after her death; and that when I opened the desk as she desired, no such packet was there. My own opinion is that the key was taken from

me during my sleep from the effects of an opiate, and the papers extracted; but I am unable to say by whom, though I have strong suspicions. At any rate, I failed at my post, and cannot look you in the face till I have retrieved my error."

"This throws some light on your anonymous correspondent, certainly," said Miss Combermere. "Stay, here is a postscript, which will perhaps tell us more."

"'The Doctor asks if Emily will find him some creatures, whose names he has written down, which are to be found at the English Lakes.' I hope they are harmless."

"Dear me," commented Kate, "I hope so too. Have you any idea what they are?"

"Only caterpillars of one or two moths. The Archdeacon and Emily hunted them up out of one of his books, and at the proper season will supply the demand. It is evidently meant as a prescription for her mind; and by what I have seen of the

Doctor, we may be glad to compound for nothing worse."

"Defend me from such remedies," said Kate: "and let me advise you, in strict confidence, not to allow the Archdeacon to do what he pleases with your rooms. He will make a museum of them, if you don't take care. Ah, Emily!" as the object of their solicitude came in at that moment, her cheeks tinted with the fresh air and exercise, and her eyes bright with animation, "you will soon know the country here, and all that is in it, much better than I do."

"Eyes and no eyes, Miss Kate," said the Archdeacon, who followed his young companion, and began deliberately to empty his capacious pockets of all the specimens, animal, mineral, and vegetable, with which he had been illustrating his peripatetic instructions. The civil dismay in Miss Granard's face, as she endeavoured to rescue her books and portfolio from the

unwelcome miscellany, without hurting his feelings, or damping Emily's pleasure, amused Kate. It behoved her to strike in to the rescue.

"I cannot help thinking, Emily," she said, "that Dr. Thaddeus would like us to get up a collection of our own, from which we could supply him as he requires. Suppose you ask Mrs. Keith if she can spare that little room where the sewing machine is, and get Charles to fit it up with shelves and cases?"

The suggestion was hailed with applause; and while the child ran to coax Mrs. Keith, who could refuse her nothing, the young ladies made the Archdeacon sit down, and read the letters. He did so, making no comment till he had finished. "What is young Archdale about in London?" he asked abruptly.

"He has just begun work in Mr. Bourne's counting-house," explained Kate. "He is to learn his duties for the first month with-

out salary, and then begin on a moderate one, to be raised according to his merits."

"Give me his address."

Kate wrote down the number and street of the lodgings, where the mother and son generally resided, when in town.

"I don't think it will do to ignore these facts," was his remark, as he made a few notes in his pocket-book, "and somebody had better look up the party at Stubbs the chemists', and see if it be something more than a swindle. About that boy a serious question arises. You remember his saying, when the child was frightened at the Court, that there must be a confederate in the house, and the sooner she was out of it the better?"

They remembered it well; and neither liked to own how uneasy it had made them.

"Well, if 'One who knows' speaks the truth, we may decide at once that it was all a trick to get Emily out of those quarters,

whence it would not have been so easy to carry her off."

"That I cannot believe," said Adela.

"I do not say I believe it myself; but if Paul has been maligned in the matter, he deserves a handsomer recompense than to be left to his fate. And I, for one, am not satisfied to do so. I should like to see him well horsewhipped, or well pensioned, according to his deserts."

"I would give a great deal to be sure of his safety, if only on Emily's account," said Adela: and she proceeded to describe the child's sufferings at night, in words that set the Archdeacon striding up and down the room in excitement. Emily's return to the room stopped what he was going to say, and caused him to calm his impatience.

"Don't you think it would be a very good plan to ask Dr. Thaddeus about the museum upstairs, Emily, and get him to tell us exactly how the cases should be made, and so forth?"

Emily thought it would be an excellent plan.

"Then make all your preparations as fast as you can, and when I come back we will begin in real earnest," said the Archdeacon.

"Where are you going, then?" asked Emily, in a tone of disappointment, while the young ladies looked at him in surprise.

"I am going over to Ostend, to consult Dr. Thaddeus."

CHAPTER VI.

"HIS FINGERS HELD THE PEN."

"I THINK we shall make something of that young fellow in time," said Mr. Bourne.

Breakfast, under Mr. Bourne's sceptre in his own home, was not quite the easy-going meal that we have described at Comber Court. At Sir Marcus Combermere's he could conform with a good grace, and overlook breaches of discipline with no worse comment than a half-suppressed growl: but at No. 23, Camelford Square, rules were laid down to be kept, not broken; and half-past eight was the latest moment at which any correct-minded person could, or should, expect to receive a welcome at the board.

Against this law Miss Wilmot rebelled as much as she thought worth while; yielding so far to necessity that she just kept within the letter of the statute, but protesting by word and look, that it might be plain to everybody that it was an iniquitous law, and ought to be repealed. It was her own doing, nevertheless, that she had to endure it. Other invitations had been sent by friends and connections, among whom she was generally popular; but when Mr. Bourne said to her, "I hope, my dear, you mean to stay with us for the present," she acquiesced with a readiness that rather took him by surprise.

She was not the only visitor who had yielded, on small solicitation, a willing consent to taste his hospitality. Miss Medlicott, after accompanying her friends to London, proposed retiring to a small lodging she had heard of, not particularly salubrious in situation or luxurious as to furniture, but quite good enough for her,

who required so little. Mrs. Bourne, with tears in her eyes, begged her to give them a few days first, that she might recruit after her journey; and the few days were now rapidly becoming many. Mr. Bourne had begun to growl privately about that good thing of which it is possible to have too much; but his wife always stopped his mouth with the piteous question: What was the poor dear to do—when, as she confessed, there was no roof under which she slept so well as theirs? she who hardly slept at all, as a rule.

Be it observed that, as an invalid, Miss Medlicott might have been exempted from the rule above mentioned, and allowed to breakfast in her own room. But, after trying the experiment once, she decided that it was her duty to make the exertion; and she always appeared the moment the hot dishes were placed on the table.

There was no discoverable reason for this time-honoured regulation, as Mr. Bourne

had a good staff at his counting-house, and seldom left home before ten. But he liked to take his breakfast leisurely, read his newspaper and letters, hear some of his wife's correspondence, and settle what she was to do in the course of the day; and it was a point of loyalty in Camelford Square for the ladies to defer all morning occupations or engagements till the master of the house had departed for the City.

On the occasion of which we are speaking, he had been unusually reticent during the meal and the interval of study that followed it. It was only while putting on his great-coat, assisted by his wife, that he suddenly gave utterance to the opinion already quoted.

"I think we shall make something of that young fellow in time."

Cecilia, who had been dutifully holding his hat, in the secret hope that he might put it on a little sooner for seeing it ready, was so taken by surprise that she let it fall,

to the great consternation of Mrs. Bourne, and rather to his own amusement.

"I say, my dear, that won't do," he said, drily. "You may play with our hearts as much as you please, but be good enough to respect our wardrobes."

"I respect everything belonging to you, sir," said Cecilia. "Especially your opinion —and your good nature."

"When they go together, I presume. There, my love, that will do," as his wife was diligently smoothing his ill-used head-gear. "I do not wish to be late, and set a bad example to young beginners."

"Oh, you mean young Mr. Archdale," exclaimed Mrs. Bourne. "You are pleased with him, I see—I am so glad. I was always sure—his mother is so anxious—I knew he would be a comfort."

"You knew more than I did, then, for I was not sure at all; and with a mother who has sometimes been so self-willed and foolish, it was an experiment at the best.

I see he is in earnest, and Wing gives him a high character; so, as I said, I think we shall make something of him in time."

"Poor dear young man! It must be a great trial—I don't mean being with you, love—but sitting all day at a desk—and the air of the City so close! I wonder if he gets out regularly for his luncheon? I should like to ask him here, Nicholas."

"Very good, my dear; ask him to dinner. That is the only time you will find him disengaged. Ask him for to-morrow, while his mother is out of town. He told me yesterday she was gone to see his grandmother, who is unwell. I thought he looked rather dull, being, as I dare say he is, all alone."

"Poor fellow!" ejaculated kind Mrs. Bourne.

Nothing more was said. Her husband departed. And it is very probable she might have forgotten all about the invita-

tion, but Cecilia took care to remind her of it.

Cecilia did more. She came to her hostess's relief when in the agonies of composition—a note being one of those works of art which cost Mrs. Bourne a stupendous effort—and blandly asked if she had noticed how little breakfast poor Miss Medlicott had eaten that morning. Would not a drive before luncheon do her good? Mrs. Bourne had not thought of it, but it was most kind of the dear girl to propose it—by all means, they would go—but oh! this note—it would never be in time.

"Never mind writing at all, Mrs. Bourne; we can save you all that trouble, and have a pleasant morning besides. You have often promised me a day's shopping in the City, at your own pet establishments, where everything is so cheap and good; and we may just as well call at the counting-house —which I am very curious to see. You can then invite Mr. Archdale and receive

his answer. And if we are late for luncheon, and Miss Medlicott requires support, you can treat us to some turtle-soup, which she is very fond of."

"So I will, to be sure, and anything else she fancies. Poor dear, it is sad to see her. I am very much obliged to you, Cecilia. Mr. Bourne was saying last night—in strict confidence, you know—that you were quite like our own child, and if he approved your choice—but there, I am making you blush, and betraying his secrets."

"Dear, kind Mrs. Bourne, whose approval have I to look to but yours and his? What should I do without my best friends?"

"I don't know, indeed, my love—I don't know how anybody manages without Mr. Bourne's advice. If only people knew half he knows—but dear me, if you do not ring and order the carriage, we shall never get out at all."

And so it befel that the monotony of the day's work in the counting-house of Bourne

and Son was unexpectedly enlivened. Mr. Wing, the manager, upon being summoned to the door, returned to say it was Mr. Archdale who was wanted.

It had not been without an amount of pain, much harder to bear than lameness or loss of strength, that the young soldier renounced his favourite profession. In the days of which we speak, commissions were still bought and sold; and while the necessary arrangements were being made by the army agents, Ernest stifled the last pangs of disappointment by devoting himself to the study of his new calling. He was to work for the first month without salary, simply as a learner; and though every consideration was shown him, by Mr. Bourne's orders, and it was arranged that he should neither be overtasked nor exposed to cold or fatigue—still there was no escaping a sufficient amount of drudgery and dull routine, that might have daunted a less resolute spirit. The temptation to throw

it all over in disgust and despair, did certainly present itself over and over again, but was never allowed to prevail. He held on, as if he had been ordered to do so; and did not even grumble to his mother, by way of relief. Whatever might be the secret motive that buoyed him up, the courage with which he bore the rather severe change from invalid habits had some recompense in a slow revival of strength, and, as its natural consequence, of cheerfulness. He perceived already that some of his mother's indulgent precautions might profitably be laid aside; and the hope of dispensing with more in time helped him through many an ache and twinge which would once have driven him to the sofa.

His colleagues in the counting-house, who were a little shy of him at first, soon began to like, and then to admire him. His dress, his style, his manners, became the glass of fashion in the small world swayed by Bourne and Son; the younger men were

won by his good-nature, as the elder were by his respectful attention to orders. And Mr. Wing, who had suffered enough from the unruly and inattentive in his day, pronounced him to be a punctual and useful young man — a tribute which bore more value than he was aware. Mr. Bourne, on principle, took but slight notice of him at first, judging, not unwisely, that he had better make his own way like the rest; but the commendations that reached his ear pleased him, especially as they redounded to his own credit, in having discerned that there was good stuff in the young fellow, in spite of his mother's nonsense. And when he deigned to deliver himself of the oracular sentence already recorded, his wife knew that Ernest's merits were an accepted fact. She might pet him now as much as she pleased.

How much petting he would be willing to accept was another matter. When he heard Mr. Wing's summons, his heart gave an

insane leap: it crossed his brain that business might have brought his friends from the north to London, and that Adela Granard might be in the carriage. There was an eager brightness in his face as he came out of the office, grasping his trusty cane rather than leaning upon it: a brightness which was very pleasant to two of the ladies—Mrs. Bourne attributing it to the happiness of working under dear Nicholas, and Cecilia to the surprise of seeing her there. The invitation to dinner being duly accepted, Mrs. Bourne proceeded to inquiries about his health, his recreation, his meals; and stimulated by Cecilia's smiles of approval, suggested that he should accompany them at once to have some turtle-soup at Rodd's. He was beginning to object, on account of being wanted; but Mrs. Bourne knew her power, and was not to be contradicted. At the door of that counting-house her foot was on her own native heath, and her name (so to speak) was

MacGregor; and he was cut short with an imperative "Nonsense, nonsense! young men can always be spared when they are wanted to go anywhere. Let me speak to Mr. Wing—oh, there he is. You can 'spare Mr. Archdale for an hour, can't you, my dear sir? We want him most particularly, and his health requires—my dear Mr. Archdale, get your hat and your great-coat directly. Thank 'you, Mr. Wing; young people are very obstinate sometimes. I hope Mrs. Wing will be well enough to fancy a few choice candied fruits: I have received some from abroad, and shall send a small basket to your house to-morrow. And how is my little godson going on? Oh, that is right, Mr. Archdale! Now, Thomas, to Rodd's."

And, triumphant in the plenitude of power, Mrs. Bourne carried off her guest—Mr. Wing, having an invalid wife and a large family, owing too much to her good-will and patronage to thwart her in any matter left to his own discretion.

The instant Ernest perceived his mistake, he felt he ought not to have made it; but it was not in his nature to repel what was so kindly meant. The change was agreeable, at any rate; and in talking about absent friends and Comber Court there was a chance of hearing something of Adela; though he could not bring himself to mention her by name. He was more like himself, Cecilia thought, than she had seen him yet; and her own spirits rising in proportion, the time flew with unwelcome rapidity. The luncheon at Rodd's was a great success—even Mrs. Bourne being satisfied that Miss Medlicott did it justice; and she was charmed to find how much Ernest knew of the City already. In fact, ever since he had cast in his lot with it, he had been devouring every book that could give him information on the subject, and studying the metropolis of his own country as if it had been Paris or Rome.

Mrs. Bourne, whose early married life had

been passed under the shadow of St. Paul's, and who had never cared for any other locality, rejoiced more and more in her husband's excellent judgment, and smiled on the two young people as if she would fain have mapped out their destiny, as worthy successors of Nicholas and herself. And her benevolent face being apt to reveal her thoughts, perhaps Ernest read them—as plainly as Cecilia did; for he began to look at his watch, and speak of returning to his work. Mrs. Bourne said he must accompany them to Mudie's—the selection of new books for her husband being one of the burdens she was always glad to put on somebody else. The carriage was proceeding at a sober pace along Holborn, when Cecilia made a sudden exclamation.

"There is Archdeacon Burleigh!"

There was no mistaking the venerable gentleman; but he had passed on before they could greet him, and Mrs. Bourne declared her husband would be very angry if

she did not ask him to dinner. So the coachman was desired to follow him, and pull up wherever he stopped; which he presently did at a chemist's shop, into which Mr. Burleigh had just entered. Unluckily, one of the horses, not many weeks in Mr. Bourne's stables, became restive, and backed and fidgeted rather more than was agreeable in a crowded street. With a little patience the inconvenience might have been trifling; but Miss Medlicott began to scream. She protested she must get out that instant—they must all get out—she might be very wrong, very foolish, but she could not help it; her nerves were her misfortune, and always would be. And the instant the door was opened she would have jumped upon the pavement had not Ernest been beforehand with her, and sprung down in time to give her his arm, so that she alighted safely. The others followed, as a matter of course, and in the slight confusion of entering the shop, and explaining matters

to the surprised Archdeacon, it was not observed that Ernest had sunk into a seat, gasping from intensity of pain. He had wrenched his injured limb in the hurried descent from the carriage, and the drops of agony were already standing on his brow, though he tried to assure the frightened ladies that it was nothing, and they had better drive home at once. He should be all right in a few minutes, and should go back in a cab. This Cecilia stoutly resisted at first, but the Archdeacon took Ernest's view of the matter, and talked over Mrs. Bourne into agreeing with him, promising her that he would see after the invalid, and take care he came to no more harm.

"We shall have it all in the papers if the penny-a-liners get hold of it," he said. "Your husband will not much like that."

The bare notion terrified Mrs. Bourne. She hurried Miss Medlicott, for whom a civil assistant in green spectacles uncorked

a bottle of seltzer water, and spoke rather sharply to Miss Wilmot, when the latter would have lingered to ascertain if the hurt was serious: the horse was quiet now, and they must make haste home before worse happened. And with a parting entreaty to the Archdeacon to dine with them the next day, which he would not quite promise to do, she drove away as if the whole staff of reporters had been on her track, only to be escaped by diligent speed.

"It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the Archdeacon to his young friend. "I wanted to see you, but did not expect to have you tumbling into my arms in this way. What is amiss? What can be done for you?"

The spectacled assistant had drawn near; and, before Ernest could answer, he made a quiet remark in technical language, with which the young man's experience had made him familiar. He looked up with more confidence, and it was not difficult

to persuade him to put himself into the professional hands that evidently knew what to do. The result justified his trust, for the pain subsided, and he lay down on a hard sofa in the surgery behind the shop with a sense of relief that was almost luxurious.

The medical adviser suggested sleep, advice which the Archdeacon vehemently supported. The latter then began upon a subject that would have driven sleep from Ernest's eyes had it been midnight.

"Now you have done with this gentleman, sir," said the Archdeacon to the assistant, "perhaps you can attend to my business. I have some inquiries to make about 'X. L.,' who gives your establishment as his address."

The assistant bowed, took out an account-book, and turned to a particular page.

"'X. L.' Letters received on payment of five shillings. Quite correct, sir."

"Quite correct according to his notions,

I dare say; but doubtful according to mine. Can I deal with the principal, or only through your private postal delivery?"

"The principal, as you call him, sir, is abroad at present. Any communications will be punctually forwarded."

"On moderate terms, according to anonymous correspondent. Well, sir, Miss Granard has empowered me to act in her name, as the sole guardian of Miss Stormount, and her answer to the letter is that any claims on the estate must be laid before the executor of Mrs. Dangerfield's will. There can be no mystery or difficulty about a straightforward matter such as that."

"It is an answer easily given, sir, no doubt. It may not be so easy to act upon."

"Probably not: one who begins with anonymous letters and obscure threats may find plain-dealing difficult. Such as it is, receive it as final; and allow me to pay the required fee once for all."

He laid five shillings on the table. The spectacled assistant declined them.

"It was necessary to protect ourselves against annoyance," he said, gravely; "but the honour of a visit from Archdeacon Burleigh requires no other payment."

"So! You know me, do you? And you are pleased to call my visit an honour! When and where did we meet?"

"Oh, sir, men like yourself are known to many of whom they never hear. Excuse me if I leave you while the sick gentleman is resting. I have some dispensing to attend to which cannot be deferred."

He bowed and left them, closing the door behind him. The Archdeacon gave one of his snorts, expressive of doubt and dissatisfaction.

"He carries it off with great dignity, but I am not going to touch his half-crowns, for all that. I say, Archdale, what are you getting up for?"

"I want to know what you have been talking about."

The explanation was soon given, the Archdeacon producing Ernest's own note, and adding that he should have looked him up that afternoon if they had not met.

"I am going across the water, to ferret out what I can, and I may find your Jack-in-the-box, that Paul, in whom you seem to believe with a loyalty worthy of a better cause. I cannot get out of my head the fact that Emily was made cognizant of what her mother wrote—and that it was Paul who urged their leaving Comber Court."

"I know it all," said Archdale: "but I am convinced the boy is innocent, and that his absence is part of that Professor's revenge. Come, Archdeacon, I must really be going, if that civil dispenser will send for a hansom."

The Archdeacon would not trouble the dispenser again, but went to call the cab himself. It gave Ernest the opportunity of thanking his spectacled attendant, and of

slipping a handsome fee into his hand—which he made no difficulty about accepting.

"I must beg you will take this phial home with you, and use it according to the directions," he said, with more professional authority in his tone than his appearance seemed to warrant. "And at any time that you think I could give you relief, drop a line here to Mr. Oates, the dispenser, and if I am in town, I will wait upon you with pleasure. Perhaps you will leave me your card."

To this Ernest willingly assented; and, again thanking him for his attention, limped to the door, where the cab was waiting, to be driven back to the counting-house.

The Archdeacon helped him to his seat, and then strode off in another direction, without taking any further notice of the dispenser. The spectacles watched him till he disappeared.

"Well, my dears!" began Mr. Bourne, when he got home, "you have done a clever

thing among you. It will be weeks now before that poor young fellow, Archdale, will be fit for work. He stumbled into the office, and took his usual place; and the next thing that happened he was in a dead faint on the floor. And he won't have his mother sent for because his grandmother is ill. How he will pull through it I cannot say."

Perhaps he would not have said so much had he foreseen the result of his words: he soon found he had raised a storm which was not easy to quell. Mrs. Bourne fell into an agony. She should never be happy again if the dear young man suffered from bad nursing and neglect—no one could blame poor Miss Medlicott for being nervous. Cecilia persisted in saying it was her fault, and perhaps it was, but that only made it worse. Lodging-house servants were never to be trusted about fires, or medicine, or anything to do with illness; and she should never sleep a wink at night for thinking he

was lying there in pain, and their horse the cause. In short, Mrs. Bourne was so unhappy, and unhappiness made her so exceedingly vehement, that she carried her husband's outworks by storm, and the citadel was fain to parley and surrender on her own terms.

"Take your own way, and let us have a little peace, Betty, for pity's sake. I should have thought one patient in a house like Miss Medlicott would have satisfied any reasonable being. But you are not reasonable, and so it is of no use arguing."

Thanking him as much as if the idea had come from himself, the good lady lost no time in availing herself of the extorted permission. Her orders were given at once, and before ten o'clock the next morning she was in Ernest's lodgings, armed with Mr. Bourne's authority to carry him off, then and there, to be nursed at their house.

And if Mrs. Bourne could overpower dear Nicholas, it was not likely she would be

baffled by any reluctance on the part of a young man, too exhausted and ill to care much what became of him. All his remonstrances were quite disregarded; she swept him into the carriage before he knew where he was, and he was installed as chief patient in one of her best bedrooms, to remain a prisoner on parole till such time as he was pronounced fit for work.

"It was a fortunate thing," she said to Miss Wilmot, in confidence, "that he lost that merry-andrew of a boy of his, for one must have let him come, and I should have been in terror of my life. People who swallow fire and pull up tape are never to be trusted."

CHAPTER VII.

JUSTINE'S DIPLOMACY.

A MOONLESS night, an angry sea, a keen, cutting wind making the attractions out-of-doors, it was no wonder that Cosmo Dangerfield preferred lamp and fire within. He sat in his favourite room in his house at Ostend, musing over his coffee, instead of sallying forth for the brief nocturnal stroll that had lately become his habit.

The house had been hired in his name, and he had as yet taken no steps about letting or leaving it. Ever since his return, just in time to attend his wife's funeral, he had kept himself indoors, admitting no one, except on such business as was absolutely imperative. Mr. Walrond, with whom it

was necessary that he should have some intercourse, as his wife's executor, testified to his politeness, and could find no fault with his behaviour either at the mournful ceremony or afterwards. Without any display of grief, which might have been suspected, his deportment was grave and subdued; the general impression was that he had felt the death of Hester more than he chose to show. All the wishes she expressed were to be attended to: and, in spite of the opinions held by many to the contrary, no opposition was to be offered to the will. He looked unwell, and owned to having met with an accident, which had delayed his return; and when it was observed that he shunned all his acquaintances, and only took a mouthful of air when the darkness enabled him to avoid them, rumours began to be rife, originating in conjectures, and by degrees gaining substance and shape from circumstances.

Old Justine, his sole attendant, did

nothing to dispel these ideas. When waylaid and questioned, she only shrugged her shoulders and displayed the palms of her hands. "What would you have? If the poor lady did not rest in her grave, who could wonder, when her child was kept from her in her last hour? Her master had done all he could, poor man, and no one knew——" And the blank was filled up by a shake of the head, more emphatic than word or gesture that went before.

It was reported, moreover, that Mr. Walrond's invariable reply to inquiries on the subject was that he knew nothing about it; which, as coming from a cautious old lawyer, was held to mean that he knew a great deal more than he chose to communicate; and, of course, allowed everybody to conjecture what they pleased. The desire to penetrate into the closed house, and assist at another séance under such exciting circumstances, increased day by day; and one or two attempts were made to bribe

Justine into obtaining a private audience of the widowed philosopher. She took all such offerings with perfect amiability, though she gave the offerers to understand there were those to be consulted whom no money could buy.

"Well, monsieur!" she observed, on the evening we are describing, as she came in to make up his fire and remove the coffee-tray, "if you do not soon open your doors to the public they will come in at the windows. Here are two five-franc pieces, both given by folks who have very little to spare; they have questions to put which only the spirits can answer. I shall be ashamed to show myself at market if this goes on much longer."

"So long as you get your douceurs, old woman, you need not care," said her master. "For the rest, I advise you to mind your own affairs."

"Ah, bah! my affairs are those of monsieur. We have helped each other too

often to part company now; and if I presume to give a word of advice, it is because I wish monsieur the good luck I should like for myself. Monsieur will take a petit verre after the coffee?"

"Yes; I feel the wind through the shutters. It must be a vile night at sea."

"Just such a night as I should like to choose for some folks to cross in," said Justine, with a knowing smile, which had a grim effect on her wrinkled visage. "That ma'am'selle, for example, who has the eyes and feet of a cat—and, no doubt, the claws too."

"Poor Miss Joseph!" said the Professor, as he poured the brandy deliberately into the tiny glass. "I have often thought her mind was weakened by her troubles."

"Tiens! I wish her body was, then. I have heard people say she must be a little mad. I wish she would just go a step further, and get locked up for life!"

"You are a pleasant couple to have to

deal with, she and you; I know that. Please to remember what I told you once before—that if you got into trouble in that quarter I should not help you out of it."

"No need to remind me of any kind words you have said to me, monsieur. I know you too well. I have served you faithfully in your business before, and I'll do it again. I'll be bound to end one of your troubles now, if you leave it to me."

"Mind what I say, Justine — nothing without my leave."

"Yes, yes; that is well understood: and there will be time enough to ask leave when you can't do better. It is the waste of time and good stuff that vexes me—and, if monsieur pleases, I think I could make good terms."

"Ah, indeed! Getting tired, is he?"

"Not tired at all, monsieur, but dangerous. And, with young people, that is a serious matter."

"The young ruffian! I owe him already

more than I can immediately pay, so there is no need to double the debt. You think he may do us a mischief?"

"Judge for yourself, monsieur. I found this under his pillow, with a box of matches."

She showed him a small canvas bag, half full of gunpowder. Professor Dangerfield opened his eyes with a significant whistle.

"Mischief, indeed. This might be awkward, certainly! But look here, old woman: gunpowder does not grow in my grenier, so how did it get up the stairs? Has he, too, got questions to ask, at five francs apiece?" He looked keenly in Justine's face as he spoke, but she only smiled in derision.

"Five-franc pieces do not grow in the grenier, either, that I ever heard of. When they do, I'll ask monsieur to let me end my days there. Monsieur may please himself, but I should say it was worth a hundred to come to terms before we have the roof of the house blown across the digue."

"I agree with you there, Justine. So you may arrange the matter if you can, on one understanding. I *must* be master. I will have no partner in my authority, and I follow no lead but my own. Good service I liberally reward; fidelity will always find me grateful; obedience will ever meet with consideration; but half-hearted, treacherous servants are worse than enemies, and will be treated worse. For them there are no terms, and there shall be no escape."

"Monsieur is right. I shall remember his words. I only wish some one else could hear them, whom he trusted more than I should trust."

"I wish he could, with all my heart! I would give more than your head is worth to have him here at this minute. I shall get no sleep to-night, thanks to that young rascal."

"Monsieur would trust that doctor again, after what I told him?"

"I trust nobody, but I want Mowatt's

help, and I must have it. No, you need not trouble yourself. I can send for him without you."

"Monsieur has a spirit, perhaps, who will fetch the doctor here?"

"Perhaps. Take care you don't meet him on the stairs."

Justine gave a little mocking laugh. Taking up the tray, she moved to the door, recoiling the next moment in a panic of absolute terror. For, as she opened it, she found herself face to face with Mowatt.

If any suspicion flashed across her brain at the moment that her master had been playing her a trick, it was dispelled by a glance at the Professor's face. He was staring at the new-comer with an amazement equal to her own. Nothing daunted by such reception, Mr. Mowatt advanced to the table, unwound the long comforter that muffled his throat and mouth, and helped himself to a small modicum of spirits.

"Excuse me, Professor," he said, as he

set down the empty glass, "but I have been so long making my way into your house, that I am half dead with the cold."

But, before Cosmo Dangerfield had time to speak, Justine put her shrivelled finger on the doctor's hand.

"It is himself in flesh and blood!" she cried, "and how he has got in at all I don't know. But monsieur does, I suppose, if he sent for him."

"Did you send for me, Professor?" asked Mowatt, yielding his hand to that which Cosmo extended.

"Whether I did or not, my dear fellow, I am very glad you have come; only why did you not ring the bell? Justine knows I have been wishing to see you, so there would have been no difficulty about your welcome."

"My reason was simple enough—I was afraid of being watched: and had to wait till the coast was clear and I could get round to the back entrace. Even then I

should hardly have managed an entrance if your boy had not signalled to me from the roof how to open the pantry window."

"That boy again! But this was doing us a good turn for once, and deserves reward. Go up to him, Justine, and make peace. I am ready to forget and forgive like a Christian, with the hope of getting some sleep to-night."

"If monsieur feels like a Christian, well and good," said the old woman. "I ask nothing better than to stay in his service so long as I know it is all trick; but if it comes to be real, why, I am a Christian too, and I don't like it."

"Your scruples are peculiar, my good soul. So long as people are cheated you are tranquil in your mind; but if we give them in earnest what they ask for, your conscience is offended. Rest easy; you do the cheating so naturally that no one will ever suspect you of anything else."

She gave him a side-look of suppressed

rage, and then asked if she should get a room and supper ready for M. le docteur. Yes, the room next the Professor's own; and supper as soon as convenient. If the doctor was perishing with cold he must be hungry too.

"Not hungry enough to eat *alone*," said Mowatt, emphatically. "I shall touch nothing but a crust that I have in my pocket, unless you share it with me. Justine's sauces are too rich to be trusted."

"You hear that, Justine?" said the Professor. "Supper for two at nine o'clock—the best you can get. Go at once and see about it, before they shut up at Goujat's. You have no prejudice against that restaurant, doctor?"

"I have no prejudices at all. I will try anything in which you keep me company."

"Good, good," muttered Justine, hastily, as she left the room grumbling to herself. "I am not going to tramp through the cold wind at this time of night just to please you

—much obliged all the same. I'll see if I can't find a messenger who will be glad of the run."

She went down to her kitchen, which, though gloomy enough by day, could wear a cheerful aspect when the lamp was lit, and the stove was humming, and her little table was spread for supper. Having made a few additional arrangements, and set another chair to keep her own company, she looked round with a nod of complacency, as if certain all would be right; and then took her weary way to the top of the house: where, as the reader has already discovered, Paul Rocket was held in temporary durance.

That it was rather a perilous task she had undertaken, and that she was aware of the fact, may be inferred from the wariness with which she went to work. Before venturing to unlock the door she coughed vehemently; and, as that produced no response, knocked several times, repeating her assurance that it was only old Justine. When a voice at

last bade her enter, she held the door cautiously at first, peering round to make sure that no assault was intended. A gust of wind nearly blew out her candle, and the cold of the garret struck through her bones. No wonder, she thought, when looking up she saw the stars shining through an open trap-door, through which the prisoner had just been taking the air on the roof, by the help of a cord still dangling from the rafters.

"Come on, old lady," he said, amused by her consternation; "if you wish to try rope-dancing, now is your time, and a splendid peep of the sea into the bargain. It is not so hard as it looks, any more than you are, yourself."

"Not to you, my child, with your light legs and strong head; but old women like me have only their hands and their hearts to depend upon, and your dancing is good for neither. Come, now; I want a quiet word with you before we go down to the

kitchen and see what we can have for supper."

"The kitchen? Am I free to go there?"

"You will be, dear child, when you have listened to me for five minutes. I know you will hear reason and follow my advice. I have been talking to the master."

"He has got company, has he not? I saw a party trying the back door, and gave him a hint how to steal a march upon you, which he seemed ready enough to do. I'd let the sea in, if it came up to the house while I was shut up here."

"Quite right too, my brave boy; and the master begins to see I speak the truth, and it is against his interest to waste your time and cleverness in the grenier, when you might be learning secrets, and making the beginning of a good fortune down below. The doctor is with him, and when those two lay their heads together there is always some work in the wind, and the master will

be glad enough to have you once more at his elbow, my fine lad."

"I dare say!—and to make me his tool—to use me when he wants to hurt some poor thing that can't help itself. I'll twist this rope round his own stiff neck sooner."

"No, no, don't talk in that way, pet; it only leads to sharp words and disagreeable situations. If we quarrel among ourselves we are done for. Can't you see that in his trade he is not safe while you are loose to run about the place and tell all his little plans and arrangements? Why, he might as well shut up shop at once and break stones in the road."

"Do you mean that he will make me serve him, whether I will or not?"

"I mean, my child, that it will be your best and safest plan to *seem* to serve him, as he wishes, for a regular fixed term, with wages; and that you take care while you are in his service to learn enough to set up on your own account afterwards. Mind, he

will suspect you at first, after all you have said and done; but if he finds you are going in for the profession he'll feel safe enough, for you would take care not to spoil your own market. What I propose is, that you agree to work with him so many years, on the condition that you learn the trade and may be permitted to become a partner or else to set up alone, when your time is up. You are clever enough, and you will have saved money, and old Justine will be too glad to keep your soup hot when you have your own kitchen for her to sit in."

The lad was struck with her earnestness. He remained some minutes in deep thought.

That there was a tender corner in her withered old heart, to which an accidental likeness to a dead grandson had, from the first, given him access, he knew already, and he had a certain respect for her cunning and resources, though he was apt to return her affection with but scant and careless observance. Her suggestion offered

him an escape from his present awkward position; and the restlessness of his nature would already have made confinement intolerable, but for the hopes of release with which she had kept him up. He saw at once that no better chance would offer; and with his knowledge of Cosmo Dangerfield, it seemed to him the only alternative.

It may be remembered that he left Mrs. Raymond's house in the morning, to send a telegram announcing Emily's safety. The office was not open when he arrived; and, while he was waiting, an early train came in. Suddenly he felt the pressure of a well-known hand on his shoulder, giving him an indescribable thrill, as he owned afterwards, that turned him cold all over. One look was enough at the stern face cast on him, haggard with pain and want of rest, to show that a struggle would be on very unequal terms, even if he had courage to attempt it. As it was, he shuddered to find how his nerve failed beneath the grasp of his

offended master, and a secret awe crept over him at the thought that after all Mr. Dangerfield might have power in which he had not hitherto believed.

The Professor did not waste words with him; he rebuked him for absence without leave, and asked what brought him there. Paul told the truth; and he saw that the relief of knowing the child was in safety outweighed the failure of the enterprise. A little cross-questioning elicited an acknowledgment of the feat which had caused the fall down the steps; and Paul, instead of excusing himself, frankly admitted that he would have done more, had it been required, to rescue Miss Stormount.

"You told me you only meant to make her happy, sir; and you have nearly been her death! I'll serve you no more, sir—and there's an end of it."

"Not so fast, my young friend," was the Professor's cool answer. "I have your written undertaking to serve me for a year,

on receiving board, lodging, and clothing—all of which you have received. The law is against you, and unless you give me your word—I know you can keep a promise—to go home with me quietly, I shall take you before a magistrate for breach of contract. And, my fine fellow," he added, in a low whisper, "when you are taken before him it will be found that my pocket-book, containing notes and papers which I can swear to beforehand, is hid among your clothes. A fact which will send you to prison at once; and, after your trial, may keep you out of mischief for seven years. Choose, therefore, whether to give in at once or fight it out against these odds."

"I knew," said Paul, when relating this afterwards, "that he could do such tricks, though I had never got hold of the dodge; and it cowed me to think of the police-court and of being locked up for I didn't know how long. Miss Emily was safe, and so it mattered less, though it went sorely

against the grain when I thought that Mr. Archdale and all of them would fancy I had been cheating first and last. However, there was no help for it; I was a sort of prisoner on parole, as he called it, and was not to run away till my time was up; and so I went with him, and when we got to Ostend he heard his wife was dead. This gave him a bit of a shook; but he held me hard and fast, all the same, and smuggled me into the house—it being always his game that people should not know me by sight—and then asked me if I would go to my work like a man. I told him I would have nothing to do with it; upon which he said he had a right to punish me for idleness, and ordered me to the grenier, with Justine to keep the key. I might have got out, I dare say; but I had the feeling that, wherever I went, he could reach me. Besides, I had given my word, and I knew how to keep it."

"I tell you what it is, Justine," re-

sumed Paul, after pondering her proposal in silence; "I could bite the bridle, like other people, if needs must; but I can't stand being used against that poor little girl. The moment I found what I had been doing, I took the resolution to break with such a master. What harm has she ever done him that he should frighten her, as you must know he does—and would do again?"

The old woman's working mouth and contracted brows showed very little sympathy with this appeal to her feelings, but she discreetly refrained from arguing the point. She even conceded it so far as to observe some men never understood children till they had some of their own, and not always then.

"And look here, my boy," she added, coaxingly: "as you seem to take the young lady's cause so much to heart, how can you be of use to her anywhere as you can by monsieur's side, knowing all that goes on,

and able to do her a good turn, maybe, when it is safe to do it? The more secrets you find out the stronger you are, and the better terms you can make—remember that; and I can tell you, my child, *I* have now done all I can. I have told him things that startle him: and if you hold out any more he will try other measures, and I shall not be able to help you."

The negotiation did not last long after this. Paul agreed that there was reason in what she said, and it became evident that her arguments had not been thrown away. He was not sorry to follow her downstairs; and he did ample justice to the supper she quickly set before him, laughing, as he enjoyed his meal, at her description of the bag of gunpowder which she had shown her master, as found under his pillow.

"Do you think he believed it? I am not so sure that he is so easy to blind," said Paul, shaking his head.

"Well, I only know he suspected you of

bribing me to get the powder, so he must have thought you equal to using it. And that puts me in mind they will be wanting supper at nine o'clock, and unless they know in time at the restaurant, their kitchen may be shut. They have no mercy on my old legs. Out I must trudge, hail, rain, or shine," grumbled she, giving, it may be observed, the continental equivalent to that British formula. We prefer translating Justine's remarks rather freely, to the difficulties presented by a literal rendering.

"Can't I go if I am at large? It is Goujat's, I suppose?"

"Yes, you have been there before. Should you mind it very much? They will know what to send—four plates will be enough. You have nothing warm to wrap round you. Take this cloak of mine, and don't let yourself be watched if you can help it. That English ma'am'selle has eyes everywhere; and though she does not know you by sight, she will guess something

by your coming out of this house. There! that is monsieur's bell. Don't wait to be told you are not to go, but make the best of your way, and keep your word to me, like a brave fellow, by coming back. You'll make your fortune yet; and, maybe, win a young lady into the bargain."

CHAPTER VIII.

PUT TO THE TEST.

JUSTINE did not trouble herself to answer the bell till it had been rung a second time, and somewhat hastily, as if the Professor's patience was waxing low. When she did obey the summons, it was with her cooking apron on, with which she was wiping her hands; and her tone of voice, on asking if monsieur had rung, was that of an injured person expecting an apology.

"I rang to ask you about that boy. What does he say to your sage proposals?" asked her master.

"Paul, monsieur? He said he would be back by the time I had broken the eggs

for the omelette; and it is likely he may, if I am interrupted like this."

"Back! Where is he gone?"

"To Goujat's, for the supper."

"You have let him out, you old hag?"

"Of course I have. He is ready to take service with monsieur fast enough, on reasonable terms; and I am not going to lock the door on your assistants, and do all their work myself, thank you."

"And you really expect him to come back, do you?"

"He promised he would, and he always keeps his word; monsieur knows that himself. But if I am to be stormed at for everything that I do, the sooner monsieur supplies my place the better. I have enough to do below, without listening to rubbish upstairs."

With these words she turned on her heel; and, slamming the door behind her, returned to her kitchen. A minute afterwards Paul dashed in breathless.

"They'll send it round, old lady, all right. But it is as you say — we are watched. And I think I was seen, though I ran for it."

"Who saw you? That ma'am'selle?"

"Yes. That would not matter, for she does not know me: but a gentleman was with her, who does; and I have a notion he will be here presently. It was as well I had given you my word, or I must say I should have been tempted to go and touch my hat to him, instead of coming back."

"You have gone too far for that, my child; the master would hunt you down and find you if you buried yourself under a mountain. He has been asking for you, and I told him you had come to terms: so now go up like a brave lad, and make the bargain I told you; and if you can turn what you saw just now to account, you had better tell him frankly."

The boy gave a reluctant sigh, and left the kitchen to do as she advised. As he

ascended the stairs his young face grew darker, and the lines of his mouth and cheek acquired a sternness, betokening some inward resolution, which might have had its influence on the negotiation had the Professor been able to study and decipher its meaning. His knock at the door was immediately answered by Mr. Dangerfield; he opened it and closed it again on his entrance, standing before it as if by accident, but with a plain determination to cut off all retreat. Paul's mind being made up, he did not care for this manœuvre.

"Well, youngster," was his greeting, "so you have come to your senses at last! What have you to say for yourself?"

"I have no objection, sir, to agree to what Justine proposed from you—to serve you as before: either for fair wages, or that you would teach me your profession."

"So! You have a mind to standing in my shoes some day? A very laudable ambition."

"Not to stand in your shoes, sir; but to find out how you walk in them and how they are made, that I may have a pair of my own in time."

"And with this prospect you will stay with me, and be my apprentice. It is not a bad idea, as you cannot get away as easily as you thought. For how long do you propose to agree?"

"I leave that to you, sir; only, when the time is up, we must start afresh. I may either set up on my own account, or you will take me into partnership."

"Very well. I'll think it over, Paul, and let you know. You can go down to your supper."

"Just so, sir. But I was going to say you may have a visitor presently, who might chance to make me a better offer: and I might close with him while you are thinking."

Mowatt said something in a low tone. The boy's quick ear caught it directly.

"Quite right, sir; it is Archdeacon Burleigh. I saw him ten minutes ago, and Miss Joseph was with him."

The friends looked at each other: and the Professor hastily drew out paper and pen.

"There, Paul," he said, having scrawled a few lines, "sign that, and the doctor will witness it, and then there can be no mistake about the agreement between us. I will take you as my apprentice for three years, and find you in everything; and if you are useful will reward you according to your worth. At the end of the time we will renew our terms; or else you shall be free to set up for yourself—if you can."

The agreement, such as it was, had hardly been signed and witnessed when the door-bell rang. The Professor looked at Mowatt, who quickly walked into the next room.

"If those are our visitors, Paul, we must not keep them waiting. Tell Justine to

show them into the drawing-room, and then to come up for my orders."

"And what am I to do, sir?"

"I will send you word by her."

While these orders and some others are being obeyed, we will join the visitors, and see how they came to be there at that unusual hour.

Weather being no obstacle to Archdeacon Burleigh, he had accomplished his passage to Ostend the previous night; but the tossing of several hours made even him glad of a little rest, and it was not till the middle of the day that he appeared at Mr. Walrond's office. A long consultation followed, touching Emily Stormount's affairs; and the possibility of some claim being actually set up was discussed in all its bearings, without bringing them to any conclusion but that there must have been some ground for the suggestion, and anonymous letter, some false dealing somewhere. The old lawyer, being engaged in the afternoon,

could only send his clerk to show the Archdeacon the way to the museum, and, if necessary, assist him in obtaining admittance, which, as previously explained, was not always easy. The clerk, however, found his good offices superfluous. On inquiring for Dr. Thaddeus, and being informed that he was too busy to see any one, the Archdeacon peremptorily desired the servant to go and ask where he was to deposit a dangerous reptile, which he had brought for the museum. The alacrity with which she hurried to give the message seemed to show a zeal in the cause of science to which the clerk was a stranger; for he could not help asking, drawing back from his reverend companion, if he had the thing about him.

"Of course I have, sir: and shall have pleasure in showing it to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Archdeacon. I should be most happy, but I have not a minute to spare. I must go back to the office."

And he was gone before the maid returned.

When she did, in rather a breathless state, as if she had run all the way, it was to ask the name, not of the visitor, but of the treasure he conveyed. He produced his card, on which the reptile's Latin name was written below his own, and he read it aloud for her benefit, with a deep sonorous roll that evidently impressed her mightily. She again withdrew, holding the card at arm's-length, as if doubtful whether some of the prized qualities of the animal might not accompany its designation, and soon returned with a permission to enter.

In all probability the visitor's own name, being quite a secondary matter, was not even looked at; for Dr. Thaddeus met him at the door, as if expecting a porter with a box or cage; and finding himself confronted by a figure at once clerical and commanding, was evidently much disappointed. However, his national courtesy came to his

assistance, and he instinctively called up all the dignity of which he was master, to greet one who appeared to expect to be greeted with the honour that was his due. His attempt to apologize was interrupted by the fine flowing compliments which the Archdeacon fired off, in more graceful French than generally met the naturalist's ears; to which he replied in kind, in such excellent English that his visitor at once acknowledged it by resuming his native tongue. How easily between two such men these grand civilities of speech might have been followed by controversy, we will not inquire; for before the armistice had been broken, the Archdeacon wound up one of his periods by begging permission to offer the great naturalist a specimen brought by himself from America—beginning, as he spoke, to feel in one of his capacious pockets.

"You Englishmen would be the masters of the world," said Dr. Thaddeus, as he marked

the action, "if your knowledge equalled your bravery."

"We don't know when we are beaten, eh, doctor?" said the Archdeacon.

"Nay, no one ever saw you really beaten, except by yourselves. Even I should think twice before I carried such a companion about me."

"We have got knowledge enough to keep us alive—that is the essential point, Dr. Thaddeus. This gentleman will hurt nobody in his present condition, whatever he may once have intended."

He produced a small box, containing the well-preserved body of an unusually large centipede, of the most vicious quality, killed by his own dexterity just in time to save his servant from fever, perhaps from death. The poor fellow's gratitude was so great that he had kept the creature for his sake, little anticipating for it at the time the honour of being cushioned in the museum of Dr. Thaddeus.

"Your feelings do you credit, Mr. Archdeacon; and I accept the gift with the gratitude it deserves. At the same time," he added, with a mournful sigh, "if it could but have reached me alive its value would have been increased tenfold."

"My dear doctor, in such a case you might have had to find *me* a place in the museum; and I question whether science would have been the gainer by the spectacle. But unless I am much mistaken, you have gentry quite as dangerous not far off."

"Indeed, sir! I wish I knew where. I have a slight work on hand, a treatise upon animal poisons and their antidotes, to complete which personal observation is necessary; and this is difficult — most difficult."

"The kind of which I speak," said the Archdeacon, "are only dangerous to those who believe in them."

Dr. Thaddeus put down the case, which

he had been examining through his glasses, and looked sharply at the speaker.

"Are you jesting with me, sir?"

"I would I were, my dear doctor. You, who are Emily Stormount's friend, best know how serious the matter is."

"You come from that poor child, and the brave young lady her guardian? Excuse me one instant."

He rang a bell and gave an order, returning to his guest immediately, with evident increase of cordiality.

"Tell me about her, and how she bears her mother's death, poor little thing," he said, with more tenderness than the Archdeacon could have believed lay under his harsh exterior.

He told him all that had happened, and that he had come over to see what could be done, both to rescue Paul, and to fathom the mystery of "X. L.'s" letter. His plan was perfectly simple: he meant to go straight to the house and ask for the Professor.

"He may admit you, though he has been keeping in retirement lately," said Dr. Thaddeus. "And if he does, you may make up your mind for a struggle. The man is a charlatan, I quite believe, but he is clever in his own line, and I have heard things about him which, I confess, *I* cannot explain."

"Conjuring of the mystical order, my dear doctor—nothing more," said the Archdeacon, rubbing his hands.

"It may be so, but if you think to account for it all in that way, you will find yourself puzzled."

"You don't believe the departed are at the beck and call of a fellow like that, Dr. Thaddeus?"

"Certainly not, sir; but he and his class show an ingenuity in accomplishing their ends that is quite enough to perplex the uninitiated, and to terrify even those who think little of handling creatures like this. Ah, Miss Joseph," as that lady put her

head cautiously in at the door, "I have something to show you, and something to tell."

"Is the box quite shut?" asked Miss Joseph.

"No; it is open for your inspection; the largest of the species I ever saw, and of the most virulent kind. No danger whatever, I assure you"—as she showed evident signs of retreating. "It was unavoidable, I know, but I regret to say it is not a living specimen."

"Oh, that alters the case," said she, entering. "I am not afraid of the things when they are not alive. But your maid said it was something dreadful, and I met a young man in a state of great excitement about it. You are sure it is quite dead?"

"Here is the reverend gentleman who had it in his pocket; he will be the best witness." Then, as the civilities of introduction passed between them, the doctor added significantly, "His courage is one of

the kind to meet your sympathy; he does not fear the dead."

"I fear Him who keeps the keys of death, and that puts other fear out of the question," said the Archdeacon, gravely. "The same reasoning may hold good with Miss Joseph."

"You know that poor child, I understand, sir?" said Miss Joseph. "Miss Granard has written warmly of your kindness to them both."

"She is very good. I met them by accident, and they were not above making friends with an old parson, who has lost all his own nearest of kin. But, having announced that I do not fear the agency of those who are gone, I am bound to confess that the malice of those who are left makes me so uneasy that I have come all this way to take counsel with Emily Stormount's friends, and tell them what I know."

He related the particulars of his visit to the chemist's. The whole circumstance

made a great impression on Miss Joseph. She cross-questioned him on the looks and general appearance of the dispenser, but shook her head at the replies.

"I am convinced," she said, "that my suspicion is correct, and that Mr. Mowatt is the man you saw. I have watched for his return here till people have begun to think me mad; and I shall go on watching till I catch him. A train will be in presently; I must not miss it."

"One moment, Miss Joseph—you mentioned a name just now: Mowatt. Was he your medical man?"

"Mr. Mowatt attended Mrs. Dangerfield at the last, and was very kind and skilful: but he knew of that trust, and he may have had his reasons for wishing to get it into his power. I don't wish to accuse any one unjustly, but I cannot rest until I have cleared the matter up."

"You are going to watch the arrivals now: may I accompany you?" asked the

Archdeacon, over whose countenance had gathered a cloud of sadness that might have daunted any one less preoccupied. Miss Joseph was only glad of such a champion: and they sallied forth together, to the great relief of the naturalist, who had been longing to be rid of them both, that he might examine his specimen.

The roughness of the weather made conversation difficult, but while waiting for the train, the Archdeacon walked his companion up and down the station, questioning her on many points, and showing so much interest in details that she indulged herself by dwelling on them minutely—rather too minutely for the object she had at heart. The train actually arrived while their backs were turned, and before they could obtain a sight of the arrivals they had themselves been seen.

Nothing rewarding their watch, they agreed to return for the next train. In the mean while they visited the grave of the

poor mother: a duty her faithful friend constantly performed.

"Can you believe," she said to her companion, who stood bare-headed, looking thoughtfully at the spot, as if laying it up in his memory for Emily's sake—"can you believe that I have been followed here, and asked in confidence if it be true that Professor Dangerfield kept himself retired that he might consult the spirit of his wife?"

"I can believe anything of modern superstition, but I always trace it to some natural cause. If this report has been spread, some one has had a motive in raising it."

"He spread it himself, most likely; it could have occurred to no one else. It would be a terrible day for him if such a thing could be. But if ever a spirit needed rest hers did, poor thing; and He who gives it will not allow it to be taken away."

They returned to their post: and by the time they had seen another arrival the Archdeacon began to observe that his com-

panion walked with some difficulty. He stopped abruptly short.

"May I ask, dear madam, at what hour you dine?"

"Whenever I happen to have time. It does not matter."

"To you, perhaps, it may not; but some of us are slaves to habit, and I have been walking about now for so many hours that I must propose a halt, and trust to your pointing out a decent place where we can get some dinner."

She was willing enough to show him, but it required a little sharpness on his part to induce her to accompany him. Only the promise of renewing their watch afterwards bribed her to consent: though, as he rightly judged, it was many hours since she had tasted more than a little bread and coffee.

Goujat's restaurant and café not only sent out dinners and suppers, but afforded convenient accommodation for guests to take them on the premises. Being a little

more crowded than usual this evening, it was some time before they could obtain what they required. Hence it happened that they had only just risen to depart when the Archdeacon caught sight of Paul: who was coming with Justine's order. He made a quick movement to intercept him, but the boy was quicker still, and in the dark there was no chance of his being overtaken.

"Who was that, sir?" asked Miss Joseph, of the Archdeacon.

"Don't you know him? Paul Rocket, the Professor's pupil and confederate? Has not Miss Granard mentioned him in her letters?"

"Yes; but I do not know him by sight. He has been carefully hidden to enable him to do what we know he must have done. I heard he had taken service with a friend of hers; and I wondered at the time how any one could trust him."

"His case is most perplexing, but I cannot go away without an effort to save

him. Let us find out what he came here for."

A liberal gratuity, when settling the bill, made the waiter communicative. The boy had been there to order supper for Professor Dangerfield.

"What do you say, Miss Joseph?" asked her companion, as they left the café: "shall we invite ourselves to sup with him?"

"I would fast for a week sooner than eat in his house," she answered. "But I am quite ready to face him, if that is all."

"Your friend, Dr. Thaddeus, warned me to prepare for a struggle. Are you ready for that, too?"

"I am afraid of nothing in the house, so long as I taste nothing. He has always been civil to me, and will, most likely, be so still; but he may try to shake our nerves, there is no denying that."

The Archdeacon smiled at the notion of

his nerves failing, under any circumstances; he suggested seeing her home before attempting the adventure. This she stoutly declined, and they walked to the house together.

Justine's countenance, when she answered the door-bell, wore an exterior of grave reserve. She curtsied to Miss Joseph, and, in answer to the inquiry of her master, said that he had given orders for her admission at any hour. This was taken as if meant for both, and they followed her up the staircase into the reception-rooms, in one of which candles were already lighted. Here she offered them chairs, and was withdrawing, when the Archdeacon stopped her to present his card, with a few words of apology for disturbing the Professor at so late an hour.

"No hour is late to him," said Justine, oracularly; "he is often up all night, and sleeps in the day. But he has seen nobody for some time, and it is only as a friend of

ma'am'selle's he will see you now. Please to wait here till he comes."

So saying, she withdrew, leaving them to look at each other and muse over their situation. Neither spoke; but the senses of both were on the alert to detect the first indication of an approaching presence. The candles gave but a partial light, and the further end of the saloon was in darkness. The Archdeacon would fain have asked questions about the ways of the house, and the séances held there, but took his companion's hint to remain silent; and, in spite of his iron nerve, it was not without a start that he found Professor Dangerfield close to him, without being able to settle how he entered.

Miss Joseph, to whom this sort of surprise was not new, came to his assistance at once by introducing him; a ceremony which the Professor courteously observed was scarcely needed. The high reputation of Archdeacon Burleigh belonged to the world.

"Are we to bandy compliments, as we did at the museum?" thought the Archdeacon; and he accepted his share with nothing more than a bow and an apology for taking up the Professor's time. He had called to speak about a boy, Paul Rocket.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Archdeacon. The boy shall be sent for if you wish. Have you anything to accuse him of?"

"I shall be glad to know if it is of his own free will that he has left his situation and his master: left without any warning?"

"Perhaps this paper will answer that question best. He certainly signed it of his own free will. I show it you in deference to your character and office, Mr. Archdeacon; but I do not admit that any one has a right to inquire into the affairs of my household."

"May I speak to the boy, as you were good enough to propose?"

"Certainly."

He rang the bell twice, and Paul made his appearance. He bowed to the Archdeacon, and stood with his eyes fixed on his master.

"Paul, my lad," said Mr. Burleigh, without waiting for the latter to explain why he was summoned, "your friends in England do not like to believe you can have played them false, and I am come to see what your behaviour means. Mr. Archdale is sure there must be some reason for your even appearing to be ungrateful for his confidence, and Professor Dangerfield is good enough to allow me to ask you, in his presence, what I am to say to him when I return."

"Speak for yourself, Paul," said the Professor. "You can tell the reverend gentleman whether you signed this of your own free will or not?"

"If you please, Mr. Archdeacon," said Paul, looking steadily at Mr. Burleigh, though his face looked pale and his eyes

sunken, "please tell Mr. Archdale that I did not know, when I took his service, that I was still bound by contract to the Professor. I have now made a fresh agreement with him, and I must stick to it."

"You hear, sir. Are you satisfied?" asked Cosmo, blandly.

"I hear; but being satisfied is another matter. However, if it be as the lad says, I can do nothing but settle with him for his wages, in my friend Archdale's name. There, my lad," putting a sovereign in his hand, "I am sorry for your decision, and still more for your future. The work in which you are engaged is dangerous, and its objects are false and cruel. Better earn your bread in the roughest workshop than by making a mockery of that which the worst of us hold sacred."

"You may go, Paul," said his master, sternly. The boy bowed and left the room, having first laid the piece of gold on the table.

"Now, Mr. Archdeacon," said Cosmo Dangerfield, turning to that gentleman, "I have allowed you to speak freely enough, and you will allow me to do the same. To insult my character you may, like your friends, consider is a duty; but where is the mockery you speak of?"

"Sir, I spoke to the boy in your presence as I should have spoken behind your back. I am one of Emily Stormount's friends, and I give you notice that we mean to protect her from your cruelty by every means in our power. The law is on our side, and it will be at your own risk if you meddle with her again. As to the mockery of pretending to hold communion with the invisible world, in order to deceive the ignorant and torture the helpless, I have used the mildest word that can express my meaning."

"You are angry, Mr. Archdeacon, because the spy you hoped to employ against me has proved to be my own chosen instrument—

a valuable medium, over whom I have power beyond his skill or yours to overcome. Have you ever tested the science you call a mockery?"

"I have no curiosity on the subject, sir."

"You have no secret to clear up? No Samuel you would invoke, could the days of Endor come again?"

"Until, like King Saul, I make my God my enemy, I am not likely to follow his example."

"Your profession leads you to study men's hearts. Could you bear a sight of your own?"

"I ought to bear it, for it has been my study for many a year. Come, sir, this is trespassing on holy ground, which I am not prepared to allow."

"Priest! blinded by your own arrogance as you are, if I show you a spirit, more powerful than evil, more bitter than the worst you denounce in your pulpit, and tell

you it has its home in your own soul, what then?"

Without waiting for a reply, he blew out both the wax candles, and at the same moment a curtain rose slowly from the end of the room, revealing what seemed a strongly illuminated dial-plate, without cyphers, their place being occupied by an open rim; which rim, as they watched, began to revolve round the motionless hands. The Professor's voice rose like a hiss in his visitor's ear.

"Have you courage enough to test the oracle?"

"Not if I am to meddle with the apparatus," was the Archdeacon's quick reply. "Go on, by all means; it is very clever. I have shown youngsters worse at the Polytechnic."

"Show your children this: and let them profit by your teaching!"

The rim of the dial revolved more rapidly, and letters gradually appeared through the

opening; forming at last, in burning characters, the word "REVENGE!"

William Burleigh, the priest and the scholar, recoiled as though a gun had been fired into his bosom.

CHAPTER IX.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

"WHO do you think is here, ma'am, and has sent you these, with her love, and hopes to come and see you this afternoon?"

At the window of a small room in her lodgings near the Lakes, looking out, through clusters of roses, on the fair scenery which makes Grasmere so deservedly a favourite, sat Mrs. Raymond. Her illness in March had left a lingering weakness behind it, for which change of air and scene had been recommended, and they had now been two or three days settled in their pretty lodging, already wearing the aspect of delicate refinement which was essential to the old lady's comfort, and her faithful

attendant Bennet's peace of mind. There had been a slight shade on Mrs. Raymond's brow, as she sat there alone with her knitting and her newspaper, her eyes wandering to the far distance, and her thoughts to that which was further still, when Bennet came in to interrupt her, holding out some beautiful water-lilies.

Bennet was triumphant. She had made a discovery. In a furnished house not very far off, little Miss Stormount was staying, with Miss Granard and Sir Marcus and Miss Combermere—quite a cheerful party—and Bennet had met them. The dear child had known her directly, and so had the little dog, which could run now like another, Bennet added; and it was the little lady who had given her the flowers for dear Mrs. Raymond, and Miss Granard had given her card and said they hoped to call, and see their kind friend again.

"Very pretty and pleasant they both were, I'm sure," wound up Bennet, "and

seemed to think so much of the little I could do for them, I felt quite ashamed it hadn't been more."

"I hope you told them I should be glad to see them here, Bennet."

"I did, ma'am. And, as I knew you would wish to know how the little lady had been lately, after all she went through, I spoke to Charles, who was leading Miss Emily's pony. He told me they were very anxious about her at one time, but she seemed now to have taken a turn for the better, and was growing stronger: and he says, ma'am, she is wonderfully clever at some things. The child spoke up quite cheerful, when Miss Granard asked something about the flowers: and her face, altogether, looks rounder and rosier, poor little lady, than when you gave her to me off the Christmas-tree, ma'am."

Mrs. Raymond smiled. "And how is Miss Granard looking, Bennet?—I know she is one of your beauties."

"Well, ma'am, I did take the liberty of looking at her, when she was talking to Miss Combermere, and I must say it was such a pleasure, that I couldn't help wishing——" Here Bennet checked herself, and became absorbed in the arrangement of the water-lilies.

"Wishing what? Anything I can do for you?" asked her mistress, moving restlessly on the chair.

"Oh, ma'am, it is not for me to propose such a thing. It was what you said before we left home that put it into my head—when you were talking of the heat and smoke of London being bad for Mr. Ernest Archdale."

"Ah, that is what you are thinking of," returned Mrs. Raymond with a half sigh, and she said no more. But Bennet thought it a good sign that her mistress turned to her portfolio, and sat musing over the last letters from her daughter and grandson, as if weighing some difficult question in her mind.

By-and-by, her young friends came, according to promise, to pay their visit. It was a real pleasure on both sides, and when Emily, attracted by the roses, had gone out into the porch with Bennet, Adela Granard was able to give her kind old friend some satisfactory information about the child's progress.

Charles had expressed it accurately: Emily had certainly taken a turn for the better, and was beginning to do credit to the skill of her physician, Sir Marcus Combermere. They had had some weeks of anxious watching, but, as Sir Marcus said, they had to wait till nature made the necessary effort, and her youth being in her favour, that effort had been made. She was growing fast, and her nerves and brain were in a more healthy condition. Every day that passed without anything to cause dangerous excitement, was pure gain; and either that enemy, her stepfather, had other objects in view, or despaired of success in an attempt

against her peace, for she was left quite undisturbed. Of the trouble and labour her affairs brought to her guardian, Miss Granard, Emily of course knew little or nothing. Regular hours, cheerful companionship, and as much employment as she seemed able to enjoy, had already laid the foundation of wholesome habits, on which Adela hoped to rear a good education, though diffidence of her own powers and judgment made her proceed with the utmost caution at every step. Emily had learned little regularly, and was very soon tired when a subject did not interest her; on one she liked she would willingly bestow any amount of labour. While it was a hard matter to coax her through the rudiments of arithmetic, she learned pages of poetry by heart, appreciating the sublime and beautiful without knowing why; and though she wearied of anything like the routine of lessons, she would pore over the volumes in the Archdeacon's library, in search of

information about bird, beast, or flower, that many a clever school-girl would have pronounced too dry for amusement. One great thing was, they kept *fear* from her.

The image of her mother—no longer suffering and harassed, but resting in peace and safety, as she was taught to trust and believe—was treasured in her heart's innermost shrine as sacred and precious; only to be spoken of with Adela. From Adela nothing was reserved; and whatever she taught was accepted without a question; but as Emily's imagination cleared itself from the influences that had troubled it, the colours it threw on the truths she learned to believe, were vivid enough to startle her teacher. Questions and comments, that seemed beyond her years, first filled Adela with gladness, and then with anxiety; and the dread of making a mistake in the difficult task of education drove her frequently for advice to her elder counsellors, the Archdeacon and Sir Marcus.

Each gave it from his own point of view; but in substance it was much the same, and Adela followed it carefully. Without throwing the young imagination back on itself for want of sympathy, she tried to keep her from the dangers of self-contemplation by making every glow of feeling an impulse to some kind action. She roused in her mind the ambition of being a helper of others; and they seemed to open a new world of pleasure to Emily. The day was too short for all she had to do and think of; and night brought her healthful rest, such as she had not known for many months. The present temporary change to Grasmere had been suddenly undertaken for Emily's sake alone; and her delight in it was great. They had not anticipated the additional pleasure of falling in with their kind friend, Mrs. Raymond.

That the pleasure was mutual there could be no doubt. While Adela, encouraged by Mrs. Raymond's looks of sympathy and

interest, talked of her ward, the old lady was thinking of the guardian, and her eyes rested on the lovely face and form with an increased approval of the mind that dwelt within. "My boy has not given his heart away unworthily," she thought, "and if I could see him blessed with such a wife as this, I should feel I had only one thing left to desire—the one thing I may never hope to obtain."

Perhaps it was because he was in the minds of both that neither of them mentioned Ernest Archdale, except casually. Emily ran in; Bennet brought in tea and cake; and the conversation turned on the walks and drives in the neighbourhood. All of them were so familiar to Mrs. Raymond, that she could suggest pretty little expeditions in plenty. When pressed to join in them, however, she hung back, and could only be brought to say that perhaps in two or three days, when she had a new walking-stick, she might feel more equal to it.

"A new walking-stick!" exclaimed Adela: and the old lady nodded.

As it happened, however, the weather became stormy that night, and long expeditions were out of the question; and by the time sunshine returned, the walking-stick waited for arrived by train. No other than Ernest Archdale.

"For an old woman, I am a very unwise one," Mrs. Raymond observed to Bennet; "and for a sensible, practical woman, you are singularly silly. But the thing is done, and he is come; now, on Napoleon's principles, we must stand by it. Napoleon always maintained that an error persisted in became wisdom in the eyes of posterity. Let us hope ours may have as good success."

Her invitation to her grandson to come and cheer her loneliness, written on the evening after Adela's visit, had only hinted to Ernest that he would find friends in the place who would be glad to see him; but his

imagination supplied the rest. It decided his plans at once, to the no small discomfiture of other people's. His having been nursed at Mrs. Bourne's had given him a footing of intimacy in the family, and it had been the business of Miss Wilmot's life since to reconcile his mother and her own irascible guardian; and she had so far succeeded, after sundry failures, that Mrs. Archdale had been formally invited to join the party in their annual visit to Folkestone. Apartments had been secured in one of the best situations, and as Miss Medlicott was still kind enough to favour them with her society, and required sea air as much as any one, there was less difficulty in bringing Mr. Bourne to see that an additional companion might be an advantage. Even the prospect of an occasional quarrel was to him more enlivening than the continual topic of Miss Medlicott's sufferings and patience.

Mrs. Archdale accepted all the civilities

shown to her with sufficient moderation to maintain her dignity; in her secret soul she chafed at the necessity of conciliation, while longing to turn it to account. The ladies were to go down first, and Mr. Bourne and Ernest to follow—the latter being promised a month's holiday—as soon as some business had been got through which would till then detain his chief. This arrangement had been made without his being consulted, and he had all along asserted that his going was uncertain; but his mother was confident of carrying the point, till Mrs. Raymond's letter fell on her hopes like a thunderbolt. To oppose a wish of the grandmother's would have been a breach of duty not to be named; but it was hard to see her boy's face flush, and to hear by the tremulous tones in which he tried to speak indifferently, that his pulse was leaping with gladness at the prospect before him.

All objections on the score of expense

were overruled by the enclosure of a little slip of grey paper, which was down in Mrs. Raymond's account-book as the price of a walking-stick; and the only resource left to Mrs. Archdale was to show herself unselfish, and make it clearly understood that her comfort and pleasure were entirely secondary considerations. So long as he and her dear mother were happy together, that was all she wished. She would make the best of it to their hospitable entertainers: only the chances were they might take his absence as a slight.

"And visit it upon you, mother—that would never do. I cannot see why I may not please all parties, by going down to the dear granny first, and joining you later. Depend upon it, I shall be much more welcome and much more agreeable if I am not with you too long. If only I could have you with me at Grasmere! What do you say? Could you go?"

"Oh no, no! it is not to be thought of.

The offence to the Bournes would be mortal; and it would be unkind to that poor dear girl Cecilia, who has built her hopes upon my going with them. But, Ernest, my mother wants you directly, you see: how can you get leave so soon?"

"I'll try the old gentleman the first opportunity, and perhaps I can bring him round," said Ernest, whose thin face was quivering with eagerness; an eagerness which made all obstacles appear rather as grass to be trampled upon than as fences to turn him back. He took Mr. Wing into his confidence, obtained the promise of his support, and then boldly went in to Mr. Bourne and asked if he could not be spared a few days sooner to visit his grandmother. On a little demur being raised on account of the work that had to be cleared off, he at once volunteered to work double tides; and this being conceded, he went off to his counsellor at the chemist's, with whom he had had dealings several times that summer.

Mr. Cloud, the dispenser, always received him in a back room, and seemed to know by intuition what he wanted.

"You must give me something this time that will keep me awake, and put my brain in first-rate working order," was the patient's statement of his case. And the appeal was so well responded to, that all were amazed at Mr. Archdale's energy and quickness during the next two days of unceasing labour: from which he was released in time to start for the Lakes by the night train.

He reached Grasmere when his grandmother was at breakfast. Repudiating all suggestions about going to bed, he took his place at the table in excellent spirits, talking of London, and public news, and the pictures of the year, and such topics as are peculiarly acceptable to those at a distance from the scene of action; talking volubly. But Bennet, as she waited on them both, was not long in detecting his want of appe-

tite, though she tried one thing after another, as far as her limited larder would allow. He was too excited to please her; and there was a look about his eyes she had never seen before. Faithful Bennet was puzzled. Perhaps it was the heat of London, or the fatigue of the journey; but if it had been anybody but Mr. Ernest, she would have declared he was in the habit of taking stimulants—something or other that was doing him no real good.

His grandmother, whose sight was not so keen, or who was too glad at heart to be so observant, only noticed that he made a poor breakfast, and set that down to fatigue. So she refrained from lamentations, promising herself that he would make amends when he had rested body and spirit a little, and she despatched a pencil note to Sir Marcus Combermere.

"My walking-stick is come; I challenge the Woods and Forests to find me such another. Bring one of your ladies to luncheon, and judge for yourself."

"Where is that going to?" asked Ernest, as he saw the note delivered to Bennet.

"A little business of mine, my dear," was all the answer till the missive was fairly gone. Then she told him its purport: a young lady was coming.

He looked almost dismayed, and turned to the glass. "How do I look, granny? Is there anything amiss with me?"

"Vain youth! Is it your own appearance you are thinking of at such a moment?"

"I should think it was, when eyes like Sir Marcus Combermere's are to pass judgment upon it. However, I must take my chance; it is too late now. Granny, what should you say if we actually found the dowry, after all?"

"Don't, my boy. It is a subject I do not trust myself to joke about."

"I mean no joke; it is quite beyond that to me."

"Then what is the use of talking about what is gone, when you know, as well as I

do, that everything has been tried to trace it, and no clue ever found in all these years? If there had been a chance, do you think I would have thrown it away?"

"Do you ever dream about it, granny?"

"I have dreamt of it often, my dear; and been quite ashamed when I woke, to think how silly my dreams had been. But my waking ones are not much wiser, I am afraid."

"You may live to see them all realized. They shall be, if *I* live, and keep my senses. Have I been talking nonsense all this time?"

"No, my boy; only you seem full of something that excites you. Why did you ask about my dreams?"

"Because *I* have begun to dream, regularly, consistently, about the discovery we want; and I have just a ray of hope that it may lead to the truth."

"What makes you so suddenly eager about it, Ernest? I remember how you

used to laugh at my castles in the air! now you seem to be building at a rate I never attained to in my liveliest days. What says your dear mother to your dreams?"

"My mother has quite enough with the day's realities; I do not trouble her with the visions of the night. But it is for her sake, in the main, that I want to strike a vein of gold—to release her from worries, and make a home where she will be always the first object, and where she must be happy, if the presence of an angel can give happiness. Do you suppose it is for my own pleasure I am boxed up in old Bourne's counting-house day after day, granny, with the prospect of doing it for years to come?"

But all this was so unlike himself, that his grandmother grew uneasy, and tried to change the conversation. Without success at first. He went on talking more and more vehemently, and dropping hints about his dreams and their meaning; it so dis-

tressed her at last, that she rang the bell for Bennet, under pretence of giving an order. Bennet felt more alarmed than her mistress. At length he was induced to lie down on the sofa, and keep quiet; and, once there, he soon fell asleep.

Sir Marcus called before he woke, and Mrs. Raymond received him in the garden, that she might confide to him this new uneasiness. He listened with his usual kindness, making no comment till she had finished; when he quietly asked what the discovery meant, which the poor boy had been dreaming about.

"That is a story that could not be told you now, Sir Marcus; I must feel quite sure of my own nerves and courage when I begin to tell it. I know, beforehand, what you will say. You will point out, as others have done, the extreme folly of thinking about it at all."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Raymond, if I object to your taking for granted anything I may

say, before I have said it. My opinions are my own, and even you cannot guess them beforehand."

"You are right; I ought to have known better. But there is not time now for my history. You must come in and take luncheon, and look at my dear boy, without letting him find out I have spoken to you. I have great hopes that fresh air and charming society may, after all, be his best cure."

"He shall have as much of it as we can give him," said Sir Marcus.

Sir Marcus had intentionally come alone, for Bennet had dropped a hint that Mr. Ernest was not himself, and he was anxious to see him quietly. The young man's sleep had done him good, and when Mrs. Raymond brought in her visitor, Ernest was ready to receive him in a more natural manner. Mrs. Raymond's eyes, however, were watching Sir Marcus's face, and she saw, or thought she saw, a slight change

pass over it as he looked at her grandson. It was just a momentary contraction of the brows, as if he saw something that displeased him; and it was gone before she could feel sure she had not been mistaken. Sir Marcus said very little about the young man's health—not more than it would have been unkind to omit. He talked of Grasmere, and made him cordially welcome to join their proposed excursions, which had been only waiting for the fine weather. And that Ernest seemed to have brought with him.

"As you seem to have recovered your walking powers, you will not be afraid of a picnic," said Sir Marcus. "We have a pony for Emily, and you can make interest with Charles for a lift now and then."

Ernest observed, by way of answer, that he really owed something to the twist he had given himself when getting out of Mrs. Bourne's carriage. The treatment Cloud had used had done him more good than any

he had tried before. Since he had been able to get about at all, he had suffered less from his lameness, which he attributed entirely to Cloud's cleverness. He had affronted the family doctor by refusing to see him — his little dispenser was the handiest fellow he had ever met.

Sir Marcus here put a question or two, and elicited a few facts. He then changed the conversation by asking Ernest whether he had heard anything of Paul Rocket.

"Not since the Archdeacon called on me in London, and told me Paul had to serve out his time with his old master. But twice lately I fancied I saw him—once in Hyde Park, and once in the street; and each time it seemed as if he were watching me: but before I could make sure of him, he vanished."

"If he is in London, we may be sure of one thing — that his master is there too."

"I believe he is. I hear that he is being

consulted by people, and is giving extraordinary answers. He is said to be only accessible at night: no one knows what he does by day."

"Where did you learn this, Archdale?"

"From my clever dispenser, who really ought to write himself M.D."

"Has he recommended your consulting the Professor?"

"Oh no; he only talked of him as a remarkable man, whatever his principles might be. And really the things he describes must be worth looking into, if only for their cleverness. Cloud says I should be surprised to know how much influence Professor Dangerfield and some one or two others have—how many people consult them secretly, while pretending to laugh at them in public."

"I can quite believe it; it always has been so, and, I suppose, always will be," said Sir Marcus, drily; and, the luncheon being ready, they sat down to it.

Whether from fatigue, or from breakfasting late, did not appear, but the watchful eyes of the visitor noticed how little appetite the young man had brought from London, and on speaking of it, heard that it had failed him some time.

"We must remedy that, Mrs. Raymond, by fresh air and gentle exercise," was his comment to the old lady; but when he could get Bennet alone for a moment, he spoke more plainly.

"Have you noticed any special thing in Mr. Archdale to make you uneasy? You are a born nurse, so I can rely on your observation," he said.

"Indeed, Sir Marcus, I have," was the woman's answer. "I said to myself this morning, that if it had been anybody but Mr. Ernest Archdale, I should have thought he had been taking something."

"Depend upon it, he does take something; and you must find out what it is. Say nothing to your mistress, or to him,

but watch your opportunity, and, whatever it is, let me have a look at it. Unless I am very much mistaken, he has got into dangerous hands."

CHAPTER X.

IN EASEDALE.

"I HOPE this is doing as I would be done by," thought Kate Combermere as she sat down on a slab of mossy rock, with a basket on her knee; in which a tin box, some sheets of blotting-paper, and two or three phials, with air-holes in their corks, were stored for the benefit of the museum. Dandie, panting for breath, his feathery paws and long nose brown with mould, lay at her feet, recovering from a frantic assault on a rabbit-hole, whence he had been dragged off with difficulty, and to which he was privately scheming to return. Coco, having been beguiled into sharing the forbidden sport, had found it so charming, though his share had been principally bark-

ing outside, that he sat with undisguised impatience watching Emily's movements, as she wandered among the trees and stones, searching for curiosities; while Adela was sketching at some little distance, Ernest Archdale by her side. He knew more about sketching than she did, and was anxious she should improve, so part of this day's ramble was to be devoted to art as well as to science; and the beauties of Easedale had beguiled them into going further than they had intended. He was still rather dependent on his good stick, and, as much on his account as on her own, Miss Granard had proposed a halt at a favourable spot: and after seeing the drawing fairly begun, Kate had followed the impulse of good-natured sympathy, which made her carry Emily higher up the hill, to see what they could find.

Doing as you would be done by is always a good thing; but it implies a chance of reciprocity, and this was not at that moment

very likely to occur. But that, as Kate argued, made it all the more meritorious on her part; and, having stipulated with Emily that all insects should be well corked down, and moderation observed in the size of mineral treasures, patiently undertook to carry the basket, and to assume an interest in its contents. Her interest, in reality, lay with her friends below; and perhaps with some thoughts of another, whose absence was the only drawback to the success of their excursion.

Whether Mrs. Raymond was right or wrong in calling herself unwise, is not for us to determine; but one thing she could not help seeing—she had given her boy a great deal of happiness. It might be the worse for him afterwards—no one could tell—but the present was all a dream of bliss, the more tranquil that his love was as yet undeclared. The intimacy of friendship made all easy; and the absence of self-consciousness on Adela's part enabled him to

enjoy the gladness her presence gave, without troubling his head about the future. To speak of love in his circumstances would be, he told himself, a mockery; but to feel every hour of the day that she was growing more and more the very life of his life—that was the most natural thing in the world, and the only wonder was, how he had passed so many years without her. And though he did not speak in actual words, his heart was too much in earnest not to find language of look, and gesture, and involuntary action, which betrayed his secret over and over again, and did his cause no harm. Kate Combermere, who watched them both with great interest, became convinced that Adela, whether aware of Mr. Archdale's passion or not, was not insensible to the attraction of his society. Her face would brighten at the sound of his voice, and the double burden of sadness and responsibility, beneath which she so often looked oppressed, was either

lightened by his sympathy, or made easier to bear by the stimulus of a new, mysterious joy—coming upon her in glimpses, like a wonderful view seen through the gaps of a thick wood. They were happy together; and Kate loved to see them so, though she asked herself more than once how it would end. What would his mother think? what would Cecilia Wilmot do? This last query was the hardest to solve. The possibility of Cecilia's seeking for consolation where Kate least wished her to find it, would cross her mind, let her resolve against it as she might; blotting out the beauty of the landscape, and darkening the summer sky.

"Come, Emily, the dogs want another run," she called out, at last, when she could be still no longer. "Let us follow the path, and try if we can reach the tarn. We shall be back again before that sketch is finished."

Emily complied with her habitual do-

cility; and the basket having received a few more contributions, they pursued their way, energetically at first, but the distance proving longer than Kate expected, their pace slackened considerably, and more than once Miss Combermere debated whether they ought not to turn back. She beguiled the way with the touching story of Agnes Green, waiting for the father and mother who were never to return, and watching over the little ones to whom she was to supply the place of both. So intense was Emily's interest in the "ower true tale," in which some of our most powerful writers have found choice material for their eloquence, that she looked neither to the right nor to the left, but walked on mechanically, without seeing her path, or the prospect beyond it.

"And she was only a girl like me, and was such a comfort to the others!" was her first remark, when the narrator paused.

"Yes. You see what even weak girls can

do, when they have something weaker still depending upon them."

"It must be very nice to take care of people. I suppose the kind good spirits *like* doing it."

"We are quite sure of that, Emily; and they like to see us brave and faithful and ready to do our duty."

"Miss Combermere, when people are rich they can do a great deal more than when they are poor, can't they?"

"In some ways they can—whatever is in the power of money. But money will not do everything."

"I am very glad I shall be rich. I thought I should be rather poor."

"What made you think so?"

"Poor mamma used to say, when she was unhappy, you know, that I must learn to do with a very little, and that she wished she had never had more than I should have when I grew up."

"Did she never explain why that would *be so?*"

"No; she only cried over papa's picture, and said I should have her work to do, as well as my own. I suppose she meant about giving away, because she hardly ever had anything to give."

"Perhaps so," said Kate; but she was struck by what she heard, and began to ponder it. Suddenly Dandie stopped short, pricked up his ears, and having taken a good look at two approaching figures, tore across the turf to greet them. And Kate Combermere stood in utter astonishment, wondering if she might believe her eyesight. We must account for their presence there.

Late on the previous evening, as Archdeacon Burleigh was lingering over his cup of tea, and perseveringly reading by the fading twilight, to avoid the necessity of a lamp and closed windows, a loud ring, and a cheery voice at the door announced a visitor—no other than Lewis Frankland. Having had business to transact in the neighbourhood, and not caring for the Court

when his friends were away, he had come to see if Mrs. Keith could give him a bed. An offer of supper being warmly accepted, he soon proved that the term's work had not impaired his powers, and he was too hungry, and too intent on his own matters at first, to notice any change in his host. When, however, the lights were brought, and he had leisure to look about him, he was struck by the comparatively subdued manner of his old friend, as well as by the touch of increased age on his features and form since they had parted after the Christmas holidays. So hale and powerful had been Mr. Burleigh's frame, that it was difficult to think of him then as an elderly man; and Lewis could not help asking if he had been unwell.

"Unwell? I am never unwell. I leave that to young fellows like Archdale, who cannot live without his doctor and his drugs. You know he has joined them at Grasmere?"

"No, I had not heard of his good luck. The more the merrier. I hope to be there myself to-morrow, and I should like to make you walk with me."

"As a specimen pupil? Well, I am not too old to learn. I have had a strange lesson since I saw you. There, light your pipe; there are no young ladies upstairs to be annoyed; and I have something meanwhile to tell you."

Profiting by the invitation, Lewis leaned back luxuriously, with his eyes on his host, more and more convinced that he was either suffering in body, or troubled in mind. In either case, the situation was remarkable, for the Archdeacon counselled many, but, as a rule, took advice from none.

"In your profession, Frankland, you must meet with endless variety of natures; you don't treat them all alike, I imagine?"

"Not when I have time to discriminate. In a general way, they must fare alike, but where I can, I vary my treatment."

"Are you ever fairly puzzled?"

"Indeed I am. I have kicked up the lazy, and browbeaten the bully, and coaxed on the shy, and turned the laugh against the impudent; but the fellow I cannot deal with is one who either never sees, or never can bring himself to own, that he can say or do wrong."

"And that very boy is one who will lord it over the others, and ranks as a Sir Oracle in their eyes. The case is harder still, no doubt."

"In such a case, the only chance for him is a good downcome before them all."

"I understand. Now, as a judge of character, should you say *I* was a hot-tempered man?"

The young schoolmaster was so startled, he had not a word to say. He took the pipe from his mouth, and started at his host.

"Never mind, Dominie," said the latter, with a smile; "your silence is answer

enough. I am of an irritable temperament, and what it has cost me no one knows. But if you mean to take me as a pupil in the holidays, you ought to know the worst."

"My dear Archdeacon——"

"My dear fellow, never stop man or boy when he is trying to make a confession. Depend upon it, some of those lads that have puzzled you would have been thankful from the bottom of their hearts could any one have driven out the dumb spirit that would not let them own the truth. I have cast mine behind me at this moment—let me speak, while I can."

"I am all attention, sir; I only hope you mean to tell me there is something I can do for you."

"There may be; that I cannot say at present. You are fond of Kate Combermere, Lewis?"

"I should think I was! Who could help it?"

"It would be a dark day for her father to

lose her. Not by seeing her happy in the home that would be always open to him; but snatched from him by the folly, the ignorance, the conceit of a man who ought to have known better—as my poor girl was from me!"

Lewis was silent; he had heard Sir Marcus once mention that great sorrow of his old friend's life—the early death of a favourite niece; but he did not know the details, and the emotion of his host was evidently so deep, that he feared to increase it by remark or inquiry.

"She was my sister's child," he went on, making an effort to speak calmly, "and when her mother died, she clung to me—no wonder. Her father and I had never been friends, for I could not approve of the marriage, and he would have kept me out of his house if I had not been of use to him. My confession has nothing to do with that part of the story—he is dead too, and all that is past and done with. But

when Lilla was taken ill, she was attended by a man of the name of Mowatt, in whom her father chose to put great faith, and whom I distrusted. He was known as a clever fellow, but rash and self-confident—without much experience, and always trying new theories. He tried them once too often—and he killed my poor girl."

"Did not Sir Marcus attend her at the last?"

"I took him there on my own responsibility, when no one would listen to my arguments and entreaties; and I forced my way into her room, with him behind me. Only his love for me would have taken him there; but he did all man could do. It was too late; and, that it was so, was owing to Mowatt's treatment."

"Did Mowatt own as much?"

"He? He maintained that he had been right all along, and that Sir Marcus had done the mischief. Words passed between us such as I never had with any man before

or since, and which on my part was a heavy breach of duty. I own it—I make no excuse to you or myself; but at the time, my chief feeling was for the narrow escape I had had in not touching him. I have never seen him since, except in my dreams. Laugh at me if you like—it sounds ridiculous enough in an old man—but there have been nights when I have woke in an agony of horror, believing the temptation had come upon me at last, and I had struck him down. I thought all this was quite over, as I heard nothing of the man—except a report that he was dead."

"And how do you know he is not dead?"

"You shall hear. The case of my poor Lilla made a stir at the time, and though Mowatt's supporters carried him through, it was not forgotten later, when there was a question about his treatment of some hospital patients. Combermere had to give an opinion, and it was so decidedly against him that he lost his appointment and his prac-

tice, and disappeared altogether. When I went over to Ostend on the affairs of that child Emily's succession, I found her mother had been attended by a doctor of the name of Mowatt, and that he was suspected by her friend, Miss Joseph, of having made away with a packet of papers. With a dogged resolution, wonderful in an elderly woman, Miss Joseph had been, ever since, on the watch for his return. I at once resolved to watch with her, and satisfy myself that it was the same man."

The Archdeacon paused a few moments. And then, resuming his narrative, he described the scene in which he had been an actor at the house of the Professor.

"I am not ashamed to say that the victory was Dangerfield's," he added. "I was struck dumb at the moment, and could not have defended myself to save my life. It was only too true that I had never forgiven the man, and that was in itself a breach of the commandment, though I had

never done him an injury. We left the house without exchanging another word with its master, and I will not speak of the night that followed. It resulted in this—I felt convinced Mowatt had seen me, and was near at hand; and I would find him, cost me what it might. I stayed there a fortnight, but to no purpose. We watched and inquired everywhere, but could discover nothing."

"Well, sir, and have you heard anything since?"

"Yes; I hear from Sir Marcus that Archdale has been letting a man prescribe for him whose plan is so like Mowatt's that he feels convinced his hand is in the matter. What you talked of as a joke, I had been planning in earnest—to go off to Grasmere and speak to Archdale myself."

Frankland was delighted. "We will go together, sir," he said. "Excuse my asking one question: what should you do, now, if you met your enemy?"

"Offer to shake hands with him: which he would most likely decline. I came to that conclusion at the Professor's door."

The conversation after this took a more ordinary turn; the Archdeacon himself seemed bent on recovering his usual tone and manner, as if almost ashamed of having required and invoked sympathy. When they wished each other good night, it was with a mutual agreement to pack their knapsacks for an early start; and having that in view, Lewis Frankland would, under other circumstances, have fallen fast asleep the instant his head touched his pillow.

On the present occasion, however, he found himself most inconveniently broad awake. His old friend's story had interested and excited him; but it was not on those details that his mind was fixed. One sentence spoken casually, and replied to without hesitation, had left an impression behind that kept him awake, communing with his own thoughts.

"You are fond of Kate Combermere, Lewis?"

It was a very simple thing to say—half question, half assertion of a fact; and he had not the slightest difficulty in returning assent as a matter of course. As he had said himself, how could he help being fond of her? She was the tried friend of childhood, boyhood, manhood; her home had always been his, as far as welcome and intimacy could make it so; he looked up to her father as to a kinsman, and to her he felt he could carry every hope, or fear, or desire, or perplexity, that a man would take to his sister or his mother, for sympathy and advice. Fond of Kate, indeed! It was like asking a fellow if he liked fine weather, fresh air, and a springy turf, for a walk on a summer's day! He was so accustomed to her friendship and welcome, that he looked upon them as peculiarly his own—nobody in the world could be supposed to have, or hope to have, any right

to come between them, or distract her attention and regard from him, when he claimed his due. And yet, as he turned the matter over in the silence of the night, a strange emotion followed on the track of that plain question. How could he depend upon the durability of this state of things? Supposing any one did step in between them, and he lost his place; subsiding into the main body of friends, who have no special claim, and desire nothing beyond it; how would life look then? And if he turned from the contingency as if it implied ill-treatment, even to robbery, what had he ever done to prevent it? Had he seriously looked the future in the face, ever?—or only enjoyed the present, without aiming at more? He could not answer these queries to his own satisfaction; and, at last, too restless to bear it any longer, struck a light, and opened his pocket-book in quest of two or three small notes, delicately scented, and written in a lady-like hand.

They were not important documents; any one might read them, as he said to himself when he took them out; but there was a degree of tenderness in the manner with which he unfolded the thick paper with its illuminated monogram, and spread it on his strong, sunburnt palm, that might not have been shown by an ordinary reader. The first was as follows :—

"DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,

"A discussion arose at dinner yesterday among some of the company, more wealthy than wise, as to the derivation of the enclosed words. Knowing nothing about it, I, of course, boldly expressed an opinion, which was not received as it ought to have been. You have all these matters at your fingers' ends: extend the tips of them to me for once, and secure my deepest gratitude by enabling me to prove I am right.

"Yours most sincerely,

"CECILIA WILMOT."

"I had to write and tell her she was wrong," he said, as he refolded the note; "but she took it good-humouredly enough." He returned to the next in date :—

"LEARNED AND DEAR SIR,

"Have you a vacancy for a backward pupil of whom all England has despaired? I never felt so utterly prostrated in spirit as after reading your terrible reply; and to school I must go—after the latter Lammas holidays, unless you should be coming to town, and could try what a little verbal instruction could do, during the peaceful hour of luncheon.

"Yours, in floods of tears,

"CECILIA WILMOT."

"There is not much in that, but she writes a pretty hand. Here is the third."

"DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,

"Mrs. Bourne has begged me to find out if you are to be in town for the

University cricket-match. Never having been to either University, and knowing as much of cricket as of derivations, of course we are bound to be at Lord's in a state of great enthusiasm, and I am to ask if you will return with us to dinner at seven?

"In great haste, yours sincerely,

"C. WILMOT."

"That was an aggravating business, because I could not go, and the match was splendid. Then comes this last."

"DEAR MR. FRANKLAND,

"We are to spend some weeks at Folkestone for our health, and as I want to improve my mind as well, can you recommend any work, not too dry or difficult, on sea-side natural history? A line addressed as below will find yours gratefully (provided the book does not send her to sleep),

"CECILIA WILMOT."

"Very desirable that a lady should improve her mind, and I hope she will read the book I recommended. But I doubt it; she likes to play with knowledge, not to make it her own. Poor girl! I fancy she is devoted to Archdale, and whenever he is ungracious, it is some comfort to amuse herself with me. I cannot think why he is so indifferent, unless she has amused herself a little too often. Not unlikely, pretty and amiable as she is. I wonder what Kate thinks about it, and whether Archdale is to blame? If he has treated her badly, no wonder he goes in for quack doctoring to quiet his conscience. I'll have it out with him somehow or other, and see if I cannot do the girl a good turn. I am not such a puppy, I hope, as to suppose she cares for me. If I were——"

What would have happened in such a case is not exactly clear; but after replacing the notes in his pocket-book, the exercise seemed to have refreshed his

spirits, and Mr. Lewis Frankland soon fell asleep.

With the early dawn, the Archdeacon and Frankland began their walk to Grasmere. Intending to take short cuts, they took long ones, made some wrong turnings, and found themselves on Easedale by a happy accident, to the intense surprise of their friends.

However, nobody could find fault with their being there, least of all Miss Combermere, the radiance in whose face, as she came to meet them, brought back Lewis's midnight musings with renewed force. It *was* very pleasant to be so welcomed, let one turn up when and where one might; and the Archdeacon was not far wrong—it would be very difficult to forgive any one who even thought to appropriate Kate. Frankland felt that he could not spare her for a moment, especially in the holidays. And if a doubt had ever saddened Kate's spirits as to the amount of return he made for the

liberal outpouring of her friendship for him, his greeting that day must have reassured her.

He looked happy; and the happiness was contagious. While Emily was monopolizing the Archdeacon with the contents of her basket, and discussing the names and classes of all her plants and minerals, Lewis and Kate were chatting gaily of everything that had happened since they last met, and exchanging confidences about their pursuits and mutual acquaintances, with an ease and enjoyment which neither could have assumed had they not been real. The Archdeacon, without appearing to notice them, observed it all, and smiled a little to himself, though not without a sigh.

"They are happy to meet, and their intimacy is a pleasure to both. If they were less intimate, and less openly happy, I should have no doubt whatever."

CHAPTER XI.

A DISTANT PROSPECT.

A LITTLE learning may be a dangerous thing; but it has this advantage, despite the danger—that it shows you, better than any amount of ignorance, what it is you do not know.

Adela Granard possessed just enough knowledge of drawing to be alive to her own defects, and grateful for the counsel of taste and experience; especially when offered by so good a draughtsman as Mr. Archdale. As he told her, she only needed instruction to make rapid progress; and being at once quick of apprehension and docile under guidance, the sketching at first progressed rapidly, with very fair success.

And while her eyes were bent on landscape or paper, those of her instructor could rest elsewhere.

We have alluded before to her remarkable beauty. She never looked lovelier than on this day, when, with her cares and griefs for a while laid aside, she could freely give herself up to the enjoyment of nature; and her serenity was heightened, perhaps unconsciously, by the charm of a companionship that was fated, from that day, to take rank above all else. How soon, or in what precise form, that truth asserted itself, we are not prepared to affirm. The golden age had come upon them when least looked for: silent and unacknowledged in the snow and frost at Comber Court, it broke upon their view in the sweet sunlight of that summer holiday; and when Ernest, in the low, passionate tones of intense feeling, essayed to teach the art which is as old in immortal youth as nature's self, it was with trembling joy she received the lesson, wondering,

almost with awe, that such happiness should have been in store for her, after all her pains and troubles.

The stillness and sweetness around them harmonized with the quiet gladness which settled down in their hearts, when once their eyes had met in full, undoubting confidence of being mutually beloved; and if a tear or two did dim her eyes, and blister her drawing, as she remembered what this might have been to her own dead, and never now could be—there was, at least, no repining, no unthankfulness for the strange new wealth of love given her in the place of the old.

It is very probable that neither realized, just then, how remote was the prospect of their union—how many obstacles must be overcome before it could even be hoped for. The present time was enough—the first ecstasy of the double existence when each finds a second self, who is invested with all the noble attributes that man or woman can

attain. Surely it must be a noble thing to love, when loving raises our standard of good, sets up an ideal of which we would fain grow more worthy, and teaches humility by the force of contrast. Well is it for those who use that mystic season well—who by their very belief in each other's excellence help the vision to become a truth; and, instead of gilding an idol, to find it clay at last, convert the block of marble into the glorious image hidden within! To such the glimpse of Paradise, as seen in "love's young dream," is not a delusion, but a foretaste; its sweetness lingers among the thorns and briars of the work-a-day world, and can even make fragrant the valley of the shadow of death.

How long it was before this lady and gentleman recollected that Miss Combermere might be waiting, we need not inquire; Adela at last looked at her watch, and began hurriedly to pack up her drawing materials, with a vague sense of having

forgotten everybody. Ernest laid his hand on the unfinished sketch. "This is my property," he said, with the air of a man in his own right.

"Will you not let me finish it another time?" she asked.

"No: you may begin and finish as many more as you will; but this must not be touched again. It is to my mind a memorial and a prophecy. Shadowy and undefined distance, bright and graceful foreground—such is our portion now, Adela; and I may have been wickedly selfish, but I do not in the least repent. It will be my work, my glory, to finish the picture, and make the prospect what yours ought to be."

"You are not to work too hard," said she, glancing at the thin hands that were taking possession of her property.

"No fear of that," he replied, shaking his head, with a smile. "But—the work done to-day will make up for a great deal."

"Remember," said Adela, gently, as they

moved slowly up the ascent, "that I am pledged already to a work I cannot give up. That must, for some time at least, be my first duty."

"The charge of Emily. I know it, and so far from hindering you, I hope to aid it. I, too, have a prior duty, and in that I shall look to you for help in return. Adela, you will love my mother?"

"If she will let me," was the simple answer. "I hope she will not be displeased and disappointed."

He did not admit that it could be possible; his mother's one thought was of his happiness, and this must secure hers as well as his own. Adela was only too willing to believe it, to hope whatever he said would prove true; and so they went on, castle-building, until stopped by the sight of four figures descending the hill to meet them.

In the first confusion of greetings, and explanations, and surprises, the secret of the newly betrothed remained unguessed. Soon,

however, Kate detected a consciousness and abstraction in her friend's manner, that was too unusual to escape notice; the rather that Adela seemed quite unable to meet her eye; turning to Emily, or the new-comers, or Dandie, in preference. Ernest betrayed consciousness also, but in a different manner; and when all turned their faces homewards, three, at least, of the lookers-on had a strong conviction of the truth.

Kate, in her good nature, talked incessantly, appearing to observe nothing. "You lost a great deal, both of you, by not climbing the hill with us," she said. "Besides seeing the town, and the hills beyond, and meeting two weary pilgrims, who had every appearance of being there by mistake, though too proud to own that they had missed their road some half-dozen times in one morning—— "

"Oh, come now!" remonstrated one dissentient voice. To which Miss Combermere paid no heed.

"Two weary pilgrims, I repeat, in a state of thirst and hunger, requiring immediate hospitality—besides meeting them, I say, we discovered a lonely hermitage looking down upon the lakelet, where bread and butter, cheese and tea, were set before the travellers, by a venerable anchorite; who utterly discomfited Lewis by saying he was the postman, and could supply us with fresh salmon on reasonable terms. Mr. Frankland has yet to learn that Grasmere is a place that delights in surprises; and that a hermit, who carries the post-bag, is all of a piece with a postman who traffics in fish."

"The surprises of Grasmere go beyond the postman," said Lewis, significantly.

His gaiety of spirits had suddenly departed; the expression of his countenance was troubled. He hardly spoke to Ernest, and strode moodily along, without taking part in the conversation, or even appearing to hear it. Once or twice Kate tried to

draw forth an answer, or to win a look, but he seemed neither to hear nor to see; and when, at last, some one announced that Sir Marcus was coming along the road to meet them, Lewis started as if roused from a dream.

"I'll go and report myself," he said; and, bounding down the last slope, he was in a few minutes shaking hands with his old friend. When, however, the rest of the party came up, Sir Marcus was alone; Lewis had confessed to having a headache, and had gone on to rest.

"He owned he had a bad night, and after hard work, even his tough muscles will not always carry him through," said Sir Marcus. An observation that made the Archdeacon feel rather guilty.

"I am afraid it was my fault, Combermere," he said, as they walked on together. "He is a lad who never looks tired; and, indeed, he was in famous spirits an hour ago. I had no idea he was knocked up.

Perhaps Kate knows something of the reason."

"Kate's eyes were certainly full of significance just now," conceded Sir Marcus. "What is going on? Anything serious?"

"I fear the two young people in front will find it so. Did you observe nothing?"

"To tell you the truth, Archdeacon, I looked most at you. But—if your surmise prove correct, I hope it is a sign that Archdale means to take my advice, or I shall be sorry for my friend, Miss Granard. What reason have you for believing it?"

"I never saw two people look more guilty," laughed the Archdeacon; "and you will find your daughter agrees with me. The question is whether it accounts for Frankland's headache."

"I shall soon find out; the boy is as open as the day, and treats me as a father. Sorry though I should be to see him disappointed, it would be a satisfaction to my mind to feel sure it was nothing worse."

Mr. Burleigh looked at his friend in some surprise, but checked the question that was rising to his lips. Kate's father might have wishes with regard to her future, that he had no right to pry into. He turned the conversation to the subject on which he had spoken to Lewis, and to the most likely method of finding Mowatt. His plan was to go up to town once more, and try the chemist's shop. To this Sir Marcus observed, that as he was known there, the man he sought could always avoid him if he chose.

"My belief is this, Archdeacon: that Mowatt is in league with Dangerfield, and has been trying to get an influence over Archdale, for their private ends."

"You think so?"

"I do. I was always sorry for Mowatt: there was the making of a good surgeon in him, if only he had not been too self-opinionated. And since you are willing to shake hands with him, I should be ready

enough to give him a fair chance, did I see he honestly wished it. If that young fellow can bring his mind down to common-sense matters by-and-by, we will consult with him how to go to work."

Common-sense matters were certainly at a discount in Ernest Archdale's brain when he unlatched the garden gate, and nodded in return to his grandmother's greeting from the window of her pretty sitting-room. The deep poetic feeling which age had failed to eradicate from her heart, thrilled at the sight of the new brightness which shone on his wasted features. She read there, all too truly, that the deed was done —the die cast. Wisely or unwisely, she had led him to a path where there was no turning back; for joy or for misery, it must be trodden now, and followed even to the end. A prayer went up in silence for herself, for him—and for her he had chosen; that, by heavenly mercy, they might never regret what she had thus helped to bring

about; and so touching was the whole expression of her face and attitude when Ernest opened the door, that all idea of reticence was thrown aside. Yielding to an overpowering impulse, he came straight to her chair, and sank on his knee at her feet.

"It is as you have guessed—as I believe from my heart you wish it to be! Give me your blessing, and pray for me that I may learn to deserve it better!"

"My boy—my own darling," she murmured, as she laid her withered but delicate hand on his head, "I bless you from my soul. I pray that this may be the beginning of a life on which God's blessing will ever rest—however He may see fit to try you. Where is the sweet girl herself, that I may claim her as my own, and bless her too?"

"She is gone home with the child. She begged to be left to herself for a little while; feeling—you can imagine it—that she has no one to go to, as I have come to you. I should almost wonder at my own

audacity, if it were not for the thought of the love that she will find in those who love me."

"You will write to your dear mother at once. Will you not ask her to join us here?"

"If she can—I will leave it to her. They must love each other when they are together. You believe that, do you not?"

"It would be very difficult to help loving Adela. But give them time, my dear," added the old lady, as if some doubt lay in her mind; "do not be angry if everybody is not quite so quick about it as yourself.—Come in, Bennet; I thought you would be bringing us some tea, after Mr. Ernest's long walk. We were just talking of my daughter, and wondering if we could get her down here. The change has done Mr. Ernest wonderful good already."

Mistress and maid so thoroughly understood one another, that the faithful adherent required no explanatory remarks. She

curtsied to show her acquiescence and sympathy.

In the afternoon Ernest wrote his letter. It took him long to write. And it could not be sent till he had heard again from his mother, as he did not remember the Folkestone address.

The summer heat, so pleasant to bear among the hills and valleys, beneath the shade of trees, and by the side of lake or stream, was quite another matter in the streets and squares of London, where shade might be attainable at certain hours, but freshness and sweetness never. That any one with the power of exchanging it for sea-breezes could prefer to remain, would, to some of the half-stifled dwellers to whom escape was impossible, have appeared only a degree removed from lunacy. Yet such was the case with a young lady in the complete possession of as much reason as is compatible with the caprices of self-will—Miss Cecilia Wilmot.

On learning, some little time back, that Ernest Archdale would not join them at Folkestone as soon as had been expected, Miss Wilmot only expressed a little frank regret, and agreed with everybody that it was his plain duty to visit his grandmother first. The arrangements for the departure of Mrs. Bourne's party went on, as if nothing were to happen; but on the evening of the last day Cecilia announced, with apparent reluctance, her inability to travel. She had been suffering from sore-throat for several hours, hoping to shake it off before bedtime; but now she must confess she could hardly hold up her head, and had ordered her maid not to finish packing her boxes. Consternation was general, and Mrs. Bourne would have sent for advice on the spot, had not the young lady flatly refused to see anybody; all she wanted was to be left quiet. Every remedy proposed was rejected, until Mrs. Archdale made some simple suggestion, and that was acquiesced in so readily, that

the case was put into her hands forthwith; and the house went to rest in discomfort.

Morning came, and Mrs. Archdale's report of the young lady with it: though there was nothing serious the matter, it would be safer to defer Cecilia's journey for a few days; but the idea of their all waiting in town, especially Miss Medlicott, who required the sea-air so much, was out of the question, and the rest must start.

"She likes my attendance," added Mrs. Archdale, "and if you will trust her to my care, I hope we shall join you in a week at furthest."

Mrs. Bourne could not help thinking it was hardly fair to leave such a charge on a guest's hands, and might have persisted in remaining to nurse Cecilia herself; but Miss Medlicott demurred to this. She had a strong dread of possible infection, and also of being prevented going to Folkestone after all, and she put so decided a pressure upon her hostess, that the kind-hearted lady

was obliged to succumb. Mrs. Bourne's faculties, however, were so bewildered that her husband was fain to yield to her urgent entreaty that he would go down with them, and see them settled in their apartments; and, under these circumstances, he was really grateful for the good-humour and willingness shown by Mrs. Archdale. He promised himself that he would return in a day or two, and fetch them both; but meanwhile, his house, and all it contained, were at the command of the two ladies he left in it; man and horse were to do their pleasure at any hour of day or night; and they were bound in honour each to see that the other was properly attended to, and served with the best of everything. Private discontent there might be in the servants' hall, among those left in town, at the post-po t of promised holidays; but Mr. B as too thoroughly master for a w murmuring to be heard; and Mr ot was rather popular than other-

wise—which Miss Medlicott was not. So all was finally arranged, after an immense outlay of talking and bustle; and Cecilia, as she heard the carriage drive at last from the door, drew a long breath, and began gradually to recover.

She would not go downstairs that day, but adopted Mrs. Bourne's dressing-room as her boudoir, and there she and Mrs. Archdale dined early, with only the young lady's personal attendant to wait upon them. All that playful coaxing and engaging sweetness could do to win a loving look or word from her companion, Cecilia tried, and not without success. Mrs. Archdale understood what it all meant, and she was more than half won before; but her doubts with regard to her son's intentions prevented her from meeting the advances as warmly as she might have wished.

"What a nurse you are, Mrs. Archdale!" said Cecilia, as they sat together by the window, trying to think the air a little

fresher than it was yesterday; "I have only been half a day under your care and I am better already. Tell me the honest truth—is it a great disappointment to you not to be at Folkestone this minute?"

"I have had worse disappointments in my time, my dear."

"That means a great deal. For my own part, I feel as if London had suddenly become a peaceful desert, and we were hundreds of miles away from everybody. It is such a rest! Do you know, I can fancy nothing much pleasanter than having a house like this, entirely my own, and you with me to manage it, and to take care of my goods and of me."

Mrs. Archdale stroked the fair head that had almost nestled itself on her shoulder. It was a prospect that had its attractions; but she durst not hold out hopes that might be delusive.

"I suppose you have let Mr. Archdale know what trouble I have put upon you?"

"I wrote this morning, my dear, to tell him where letters would find me."

"Do you think he really improves in health under Mr. Cloud?"

"In some respects. I am not sure that the man's treatment of him is judicious, though Ernest declares he is very clever."

"Yes, so clever that Miss Medlicott went to consult him once. She came back, declaring he recommended her to take everything that was nourishing, whatever she fancied most. That is the doctor for me, Mrs. Archdale. If my throat is not well by to-morrow morning, I mean to have him here."

Mrs. Archdale only shook her head and smiled; she supposed it was a joke; and the evening passed agreeably.

The patient had so good a night, that in the morning she talked of taking a drive; only, as she observed, she must hear what her doctor said first. And on Mrs. Archdale expressing surprise, Cecilia reminded

her with a smile that she had given her due notice. Her maid had seen Mr. Cloud that morning, and he had promised to be with her at three o'clock.

"You need not see him, unless you like, you know, Mrs. Archdale."

Mrs. Archdale did know, perfectly, that she, herself, did mean to see and question this self-constituted authority, if he came: feeling, as she explained, responsible to Mr. Bourne.

Consequently, Mrs. Archdale took her walk in the morning, and had the vexation of hearing, on her return, that the doctor's visit had been paid in her absence. It had been owing to a misunderstanding, Cecilia observed carelessly; her maid never did, and never could, deliver a message without making a blunder; but the essential point was that he had given her leave to drive out, provided it was in the cool of the evening. They would have an early tea, and order the carriage at half-past seven,

and come back to a cold supper. It was the only way of existing in such weather.

That the young lady had some plan in view, of which all this formed a part, Mrs. Archdale felt tolerably certain. But she chose to appear quite unconscious, and followed the lead as serenely as Cecilia could wish. It was not until they were at tea that the latter made her boldest step.

"Mrs. Archdale, I have often thought that I was a great coward, when I allowed you to go and meet Professor Dangerfield for me," she began. "I cannot imagine how I could be afraid of him: but I really was at the time."

"And very naturally, my dear. He startled and agitated you, and made you fancy him something mysterious; when, as it is evident, he is only clever and unprincipled."

"But it is that cleverness that perplexes me. He certainly has some secret power that we do not understand; otherwise, how

can he reveal to people the strange things he does? I have a great mind to redeem my own character for bravery, and go with you to consult him. He knows us both by sight, so he cannot pretend to treat us as strangers; and we should at once detect any trick as to our own affairs, if he attempted such. I could put a question or two that would test his skill in earnest, and I dare say you could do the same."

"I have no doubt I could. But what would Mr. Bourne say if he heard you went there—and that I had taken you?"

"He will hear nothing of the kind. It is I who mean to take you, and bear you harmless for humouring my whim. Come, dear Mrs. Archdale, you cannot refuse me! The idea of an exciting novelty is doing me nearly as much good as your nursing. We will counter-order the carriage, and go for a walk instead, taking Jessy with us; and she will get us a cab, and hold her tongue afterwards. It must be so."

All remonstrance would probably have been of so little avail, that Mrs. Archdale refrained from offering any, and this rather moved her young friend to compunction.

"I promise to be very quiet, prudent, and well-behaved," she said, caressingly; "no blame shall fall upon you on my account. Something tells me that we may hear good news; but if it prove to be only nonsense, we shall have the satisfaction of telling the world how cleverly we found out the imposture."

The fact of their being personally known to the philosopher certainly took a great deal from the interest of the experiment; but if he could succeed, despite that, in impressing them, his triumph would be the greater. Cecilia seemed to vacillate between the hope of being astonished, and the desire of a victory over the man who had frightened her; Mrs. Archdale had some curiosity, a little fear, and a keen recollection of his having claimed her

friendship—whatever he might mean by the word. He had shown her that he possessed means of penetrating into the affairs of his neighbours, and her own in particular; and it was just within the verge of possibility that he might stand the test she could apply. If he did, and if he could help her in her need, there would be no scruples on her side against accepting his services. But the chance of this was so small, that she could not divest herself of the sensation that she was a puppet in the young lady's hands, and she resolved to watch her carefully, lest something might be hidden under her seeming playfulness which Ernest would never forgive.

No drawing back now. The plan was carried out to the letter: and at eight o'clock precisely, Mrs. Archdale and Cecilia Wilmot presented themselves at the door of the house where Professor Dangerfield held his séances.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSULTING THE ORACLE.

The success of Professor Dangerfield, during the London season which had just reached its close, had been such as to surpass his most sanguine hopes. He had suddenly found himself the fashion; and by whatever means he had become so, the advantage was too great not to be used to the utmost. On the evening when he held his public séances, a crowd of carriages blocked up the street; and engagements for private consultations had to be made weeks beforehand. But, the season being over, the attendance had become more slack; and it was supposed that he would very shortly leave town himself, and carry

his philosophy and its superhuman agencies to the seaside. And, indeed, the stifling heat of that August evening, as Mrs. Archdale and Cecilia Wilmot drove up, made the former observe it was difficult to believe any one would be in London by choice who could possibly get away. She was rather in hopes of finding the oracle had really closed its shrine for the present; especially when she perceived that there was no other carriage at the door.

"We are too late, my dear; let us turn back at once," said Mrs. Archdale, with an eagerness that showed how willingly she would have escaped the proposed adventure; but to this Cecilia turned a deaf ear. Leaving the maid in the cab, they alighted, and Cecilia's hand was reaching to the bell-handle, when the door noiselessly opened, and stood open for them to enter. With a glance of half-amused surprise at each other, they stepped in, and it closed behind them immediately.

They were in a small, well-lighted hall, with a staircase to the left, and a glass door facing them; but a curtain was drawn behind the door, and there were no signs of any porter, or servant, of whom to make inquiries.

"We had better go upstairs," whispered Cecilia, for the strangeness of this reception unconsciously hushed her vivacity; and without waiting for a reply, she led the way. The carpet on the stairs was soft to their feet, and there was a faint smell like incense, or pastilles, as they ascended. On reaching the landing, they paused in doubt, but only for a moment. A door on the right opened silently as the outer one had done, and admitted the ladies into an apartment, whose coolness and fragrance formed a refreshing contrast with the atmosphere outside. A silver sconce on a pedestal in one corner alone gave it light: but the window opened into a conservatory, illuminated by coloured

lamps; they shed a soft hue over leaves and flowers, and added materially to the effect on the senses of the spectators. Sitting down in silence, waiting for whatever was to happen next, they did not venture even to look at each other, for fear of betraying what either would have been ashamed to own. Before their nerves had had time to harden into indifference, the sound of low, plaintive music completed the fascination, and it was with a thrill that partook largely of fear, that they suddenly found the Professor standing by them without any means of discovering how or when he entered the room.

He was considerably changed since they had last seen him. His deep mourning appeared only in keeping with the paleness of his countenance and the lines of care and suffering on his features. His hair, too, showed deep streaks of white; he stooped a little, and leaned on a gold-headed cane for support. As the music

died away, he drew a chair forward and sat down, facing his visitors; who, as yet, had not mustered courage to speak or move.

"Mrs. Archdale — Miss Wilmot — you have honoured me with a visit at last. I have expected you some time. What can I do for you?"

"If you have expected us, Professor," returned Mrs. Archdale, recovering spirit, "you probably know that better than we do. We are come, like the rest of the world, to test your power."

"I remember, in our last interview," he replied, "you named a test that you would consider conclusive. But you are mistaken if you suppose my power, as you call it, is at the beck and call of every curious visitor. There are times when I can neither do nor show anything. To-night it is otherwise. All nature around us is alive, conscious of agencies at work; the animals are uneasy—the birds are wakeful —the flowers give out stronger scent—

the very air is full of sounds, and weighs heavily on the burdened brain. It is on such nights that those gather round us whom we may not avoid, if we would."

"I had no idea," said Mrs. Archdale, demurely, "that the weather had anything to do with your science. I supposed it was only our unfortunate flesh and blood that was dependent on English climate."

The Professor smiled, as one who would not deign to argue with ignorance.

"When you can explain to me why flesh and blood are themselves affected by atmospheric causes, I may be able to tell you something of what surprises you now. Meanwhile, the facts remain, and they accumulate an amount of evidence far beyond our means of collecting and studying them. You came here to test my power, you say. The challenge is not to me—but to those who may be listening—who may have brought you to this house. I give you your choice—will you go as

you came, or carry through what you have begun ? "

Before either of the visitors could answer, there arose a low moaning, as if the wind were rising, though the leaves in the conservatory remained motionless. There was nothing startling in the sound itself; but in the change in the Professor's manner there certainly was. He stood up, with his right hand lifted for a moment; and then turned to the ladies with a look of serious warning.

" I was mistaken; you have not time now to draw back; you must go on. Do not be frightened; remember that I am your friend, pledged to your service; and if you follow my directions without questioning, all will be perfectly safe. Come ! "

He moved towards the conservatory as he spoke, and they followed closely; Cecilia holding her friend's hand, and squeezing it occasionally in her excitement, but not venturing to speak. A curtain they had

not perceived before drew back as they approached. It admitted them into a tiny theatre, on one of the circular seats of which they were desired to take their places. The stage, if such it were, was concealed by its curtain, and there was only a dim light from some arrangement of lamps unseen. Their host had disappeared, and they were left to muse on their equivocal position; musings which soon found relief in critical whispers.

"Theatrical, of course; any one can see he is an actor," said Mrs. Archdale. "That music and wind behind the scenes might all belong to the Dissolving Views in the Polytechnic. I hope he does not really believe we are so easily frightened."

"What would Mr. and Mrs. Bourne say if they saw us?" whispered Cecilia. "I would give something to have them both here, just to look at their faces. But there is one good point in the entertainment: they do not keep us long waiting. There,

the light is being covered—that is quite correct; only hold my hand tight, for one cannot tell what they may be going to do."

The soft music had recommenced, and as the necessary darkness was attained, a row of foot-lamps shone on the stage, and the curtain rose.

Was it illusion—natural magic—or theatrical effect? For a moment Mrs. Archdale hardly knew; but there sat a well-known figure—the head, with its white hair covered by a soft net cap, slightly bent forward—the hands clasped on her knee—the attitude that of a person lost in thought: but the whole effect so vividly real that the beholder made an involuntary movement as if to rise. It was checked instantaneously by a hand on her arm and the Professor's low voice in her ear. "Hush! be careful. You recognize her—that is enough."

In spite of pride, courage, and intellect, in spite of all she knew about skilful manipulation of mirrors and magnifiers, Mrs.

Archdale could not repress a slight quivering of nerves: and when Cecilia whispered the question, "Who is it?" with difficulty replied, "My mother—a facsimile of her portrait."

"Take care!" said the warning voice again, as the figure began to grow indistinct. "You have seen her thinking—will you see her thoughts?"

"Do *you* take care," was Mrs. Archdale's almost indignant reply, though she kept the same guarded tone, "how you presume to handle a subject so sacred. It must be easier to show me her face than to enter into her mind."

"You shall judge for yourself," spoke Professor Dangerfield.

He gave a sign, and the form melted away, leaving another in its place, wrapped in a cloak that concealed all but the head, which was that of a boy. Lividly pale, the hair thrown wildly back, the eyes fixed with strange intensity as on some thrilling

object in the distance, it was still the face of Paul. He might have been a portrait too, for the rigid stillness of every limb.

"Will you question him, as to what he sees—or shall I?" asked the voice at Mrs. Archdale's side.

"Do it your own way," was her impatient answer, "and I shall judge the better of your knowledge."

"Listen, then, and judge. Paul! Is any one here of whom that venerable lady was thinking?"

The boy's voice came back in a singularly metallic tone, every syllable distinct, though monotonous.

"There is a dark man passing with a child in his arms. He is standing now by the sea-shore; he carries something under his cloak. They are getting into a boat. Now I see him on board a small ship—the waves are rolling high—the wind is blowing—he keeps the child wrapped up in his cloak—and points to the shore. Oh, a

storm is coming on! There! the ship is dashed against the rocks. I have lost him."

"Wait—and look again," said his master. "She remembered more than that."

"I see him now; and the little girl. They are in a place that looks like an office; a young man is talking to him—he counts him out some money. A mist has come over everything—she has forgotten the rest."

The boy's voice ceased. Mrs. Archdale sprang up.

"Is the man there still?"

"Hush!" said the Professor, again laying his hand on her arm. "Wait a moment. The boy will see him if he is. Paul! leave her thoughts. Go to his. Quick—now!"

The boy seemed to gasp and sob for breath, as he struggled to obey. "He knows he is ill, and has very little time, with a great deal to do. He wants to place her with her mother's friends, but he has

no money—what he had has been lost in the wreck; he has only saved a box, with silver clamps. They are putting seals upon it, and the man in the office gives him a paper, and locks up the box in a cupboard. —It is all gone again."

"No, no—impossible! He must tell me more," gasped Mrs. Archdale, as the large drops of emotion stood on her brow. "If he can tell me where that box is——"

"Command yourself; he will try," said the Professor: "but this is exhausting work, and he will not hold out much longer. Do you see him now, Paul?"

"Yes—he is lying on a bed—he can hardly breathe—he is cold—he is burning —he is dying. The young man has come to his bedside, and stoops over him, but shakes his head. I cannot go on—I am feeling ill."

"Rest."

Another sign was given; the boy disappeared; and as the curtain descended, the

gas-lamps were turned up, and the ladies could see each other's faces. Mrs. Archdale turned to question the Professor. But he had vanished also.

A few moments of silent expectation followed, and then Cecilia, perceiving that the door was wide open, whispered that it must be a hint that all was over.

Mrs. Archdale gave a sigh of impatience, and gazed around. There was no one visible of whom an explanation could be asked: yes, it must be over; and all they could do now was to retire as quickly as possible. The doors opened before them, as if in a fairy tale; but on reaching the hall, they perceived that one important ceremony had still to be gone through. A box, with a slit in the lid, stood conspicuously on the table; and as soon as each lady had slipped in her offering, the hall door opened, not widely, but just allowing egress, and closing the instant they had crossed the threshold.

The cab was still where they had left it, and the friends were soon on their way home. Neither spoke a word until they were safely indoors: and then Mrs. Archdale's first request was that Cecilia would not discuss the subject that night.

"I candidly confess that it has agitated me," she said, "and until I have thought it well over, I would rather not speak of it at all."

Next morning the breakfast hour was later than Mr. Bourne would have approved, and the letters were taken up to each lady's room, before they met for the meal. Miss Wilmot saw at a glance that, whatever might have been the evening's agitation, morning had done nothing to lessen it for Mrs. Archdale. Her eyes bore the traces of tears; her manner was troubled and uneasy. She talked, as her habit was when her nerves were excited, on every imaginable subject, save the one of which Cecilia was thinking; and so rapidly that the latter

had scarcely an opportunity of putting in a word.

It was really a relief to both when the door bell rang, and the servant came in to say that Mr. Frankland had called with a parcel for Miss Wilmot, and begged to know how she was. An eager summons was sent out to him at once, and he was received with a warmth of welcome that must have removed all fear, had he felt any, of being intrusive.

"I was coming up to town," he explained, "on business, and just at the last moment heard that Miss Wilmot was detained here under Mrs. Archdale's care, by indisposition; so I promised Sir Marcus and Kate to inquire as soon as possible, and send them a bulletin. Was it all a false alarm? Except that you are so late at breakfast, I can see no symptoms worth mentioning."

"You are paying my nurse and doctor the highest compliment, and if you can

persuade your conscience to try a second breakfast, I can recommend Mrs. Archdale as a tea-maker whom you cannot take at a disadvantage," returned Cecilia. "She has always a reserve of power ready to meet an attack, no matter how unexpected."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Frankland, gravely; and a look at the lady in question was met by one from her, expressive either of warning or inquiry—he could not tell which. Mrs. Archdale did not repeat the glance, but busied herself with the hospitable duty assigned her, leaving Cecilia to support the conversation, which she was ready enough to do.

"And you have actually carried this dear little fern all the way, you benevolent philosopher! It is all the kinder of you, that I am convinced you despise ladies for making a fuss about ferns—just because they are the fashion."

"I despise no one for caring about a plant, Miss Wilmot. You are not obliged

to describe it botanically, if you will only take care and keep it alive. Emily dug it up herself on purpose for you, because she heard you once say you wished for one."

"Very good of the dear child. How has she been lately?"

"Better for wholesome training, and freedom from trials of nerve. They have good hopes she will outgrow all her weakness, if those spirits let her alone."

"Take care what you say about the spirits," cried Miss Wilmot, quickly. "They can do very curious things. I only wish you had called yesterday. You should have gone with us, to be convinced, as we were."

"What have you been convinced of? Your own wisdom, or the reverse?"

"That is a question not to be answered in a hurry. Let it suffice you that we both went last night to test the Professor, in his own house; and that we have not yet ventured to speak to each other of what we saw and heard."

"He must be cleverer, then, than I gave him credit for," added Mr. Frankland. "Is it fair to ask what you did see and hear?"

"Ask Mrs. Archdale. She and the invisible ones seemed to be on intimate terms last night, and she can explain what I could not."

"There was much more than I could explain at present," said Mrs. Archdale, reluctantly. "I own that, going as I did, thoroughly prejudiced, I was almost startled into credulity. Mr. Frankland shall judge for himself, if he be really curious on the subject."

Mrs. Archdale related the whole adventure we have already described; and with a fulness of detail that showed what a hold it had taken on her imagination. Lewis listened with great interest, refraining from comment till the end. He then asked if she could at all account for Mrs. Raymond's likeness being in such hands.

"That is one point that is perplexing me," she replied, "for I cannot find the one I always have by me. Cecilia, my love, I was showing it to you yesterday, before I went out. Do you remember where it was put afterwards?"

"Oh dear, yes; I locked it up in my table drawer," was the ready answer. "I will fetch it directly"—and Miss Wilmot hastened away. Mrs. Archdale looked after her, and gave an involuntary sigh.

"Did you see Ernest before you started, Mr. Frankland?"

"Not alone. I never had the chance. There was something I particularly wanted to know from himself."

"Can I supply the omission? Is it anything that concerns you?—or him?"

"It so far concerns us both, that, much as I value his good opinion and friendship, I should have risked them both on the answer."

"Then it is something that touches his

honour, and his mother ought to be able to answer for him. Perhaps we are both thinking of the same subject. I heard from Grasmere this morning, and I believe the news I received was no secret there."

"It is all settled, then?" said he, abruptly.

"Well, my son naturally asks my consent, having his grandmother's approval; but he knows well enough that I should never oppose his wishes, whatever might be my own. I only feel that it is a very unhopeful prospect, as far as their means are concerned, and I did think that something brighter was in store for him than a long engagement, and but little chance of ever being rich enough to marry."

"That is your only objection, then?" asked Lewis, with a degree of impatience in his tone, which she did not fail to observe.

"The only one I have a right to make. He is perfectly unfettered and free to

choose; nor can I say that his choice is an unworthy one. I think highly of Miss Granard in every respect; save as to fortune."

"That sounded like a congratulation," said Miss Wilmot, re-entering. "Is it a matter of special interest to Mr. Frankland, Miss Granard's gallant preserver?"

The others exchanged a glance, as they had once before; and Mrs. Archdale, after a moment's hesitation, replied gravely, that a true friend like Mr. Frankland could not but be interested in the happiness of others. "He has been the first to offer me his good wishes for my son; and I must now ask for yours, my dear Cecilia."

She knew the blow would fall heavily: but by inflicting it thus, in public, the young lady's pride, perhaps her resentment, would come to her support. Though Cecilia unconsciously sat down, and had a moment's difficulty in drawing her breath, she kept up a brave appearance, and said

it was only what she had expected to hear, after Mr. Archdale's desertion of the Bournes.

"But how could you keep such news to yourself till this minute, dear Mrs. Archdale? I saw something was on your mind, but I laid it all down to the spirits and the Professor."

"Ernest's letter was a surprise to me, my love," said the lady, unable to repress the tears that started to her eyes, "and I could not talk about it at first. It certainly was not a premeditated step on his part, or he would have told me before he went to Grasmere: they have been thrown together, and matters have settled themselves without consulting prudence. My dear mother is so pleased that I cannot damp her joy."

"Then, that was what she was thinking of when we saw her last night," said Miss Wilmot, with mock seriousness; "and I do not know what you will say when I tell

you that I cannot find the key of my table drawer anywhere. I must have dropped it when I was out. I only hope it was not on the Professor's premises, for the drawer is full of my secrets."

"I will go and see if one of mine will fit the lock," said Mrs. Archdale, glad to escape from the room. To her, Cecilia's forced gaiety was more trying than if she had seen her in tears.

The instant she was gone, Cecilia turned to Lewis, her manner strangely eager.

"Mr. Frankland, you are always kind and considerate; will you do me a great favour?"

"Anything that I can."

CHAPTER XIII.

LEWIS'S MISSION.

It was, perhaps, a little disappointing to Lewis Frankland to find that Miss Wilmot only wanted him to execute a commission, though she owned, with a faint, uneasy smile, that it must be kept secret.

"If you could do me this service, it will be a real obligation, Mr. Frankland, and there are a few people in the world to whom it is a pleasure to feel obliged. No, do not bow and thank me till you know what a troublesome thing you have to do. I expected a box to be left here for me this morning, and it is not come."

"And you wish me to see after it. All right. At which station?"

"At no station, but at a chemist's in Holborn. If you would be so very kind as to take this note—you will see the address—and bring back the box which Mr. Cloud will give you, I shall ask you to let nobody see it but myself, and to give it to me in private."

"That is quite sufficient, Miss Wilmot; I will go at once," said he, suppressing all surprise.

"I may tell you," she added, "that the box will contain some rather dangerous chemicals, for an experiment I am trying. Until I am sure of success, I do not wish any one to know what I am about; and I am at a standstill for want of them. You are good-nature itself, so I do not mind telling *you*. Even if I were to make a complete failure—in every way—I know you would be too full of kindness to laugh at me."

His answer was to take her hand. For one second, she laid her other hand on

the back of his, and glanced in his face; where the most respectful compassion and sympathy were too plainly shown to be mistaken. But not a word was said on the subject in both their minds, the engagement of Ernest to Miss Granard. Mr. Frankland hurried away to do her errand, promising to return to luncheon and be at their command all day.

"Poor bird!" he thought, as he strode along the streets; "the arrow has found its mark, but she hides the wound well. I only hope that this dabbling with chemistry is not playing tricks with her health. She certainly does not stand in need of beautifying lotions, for I never saw a sweeter complexion. Poor little thing! she wants a good adviser and friend. I wish Kate could have had her to train and comfort as Miss Granard has Emily."

Mr. Cloud was not in the shop, and Lewis had some little time to wait, even after the youth behind the counter had

found leisure to summon him. At last he appeared, and on learning Mr. Frankland's errand, begged him to step into the surgery. Which, of course, Lewis did; keeping a heedful watch on Cloud the while, and revolving all he had heard from the Archdeacon and Sir Marcus.

In fact, Cecilia's errand, little as she suspected it, had given Lewis the opportunity he had wanted: and he was not the man to let any chance escape for want of energy. He waited quietly while Cloud read the note, with some difficulty, as it appeared, through his blue spectacles; and when it was being folded up, he asked if the box were ready, as he would take it back with him.

"I was in the act of packing it for Miss Wilmot," was the reply, "but these things take time, and require care. You are acquainted with the contents of the box?"

"I know thus much," said Lewis, "that they are chemicals, connected with some

experiment; and I only hope they are not dangerous, considering they are for a lady's use."

"I will not go so far as to say that, sir. The experiment is a dangerous one, and I should not recommend its being tried too often."

He was sealing up a small flat box, while he spoke. Handing it to the young schoolmaster, he added with a smile, "As you are in the young lady's confidence, I need not remind you that this should be delivered in private."

"That is understood. Is there anything to be settled?" added Lewis, seeing the dispenser making a calculation on paper.

Mr. Cloud looked up, as if surprised. "The fee is ten guineas," he replied, and went on with his notes, as if it were the simplest matter in the world.

"Ten guineas!" repeated Lewis, who, however he might be disconcerted, took care not to appear so. "That is nearly as

much as you would receive for a surgical operation, Mr. Mowatt."

The dispenser's start was undeniable; his hands shook so much that he could not write; he tried to speak, but seemed unable to control the muscles of his throat. Turning away from the visitor, he went to a closet, and swallowed a mouthful from a small phial; then, after a short hesitation, removed his spectacles, and looked steadily at Lewis.

"Perhaps it would have been more courteous to have respected my wish of remaining unknown—men do not disguise themselves without a reason; but as you do know me, I may ask how you came by your knowledge?"

"By no treachery on any one's part," said Lewis, good-humouredly; "you betrayed yourself to a great authority by your treatment of my friend Archdale after his accident. I promised Sir Marcus Combermere when I came to town that I

would look you up, and try to deliver a message: which I will do now, if you will allow me."

"Wait, sir! — one moment!" said Mowatt, in violent agitation. He paced up and down the small apartment as if struggling to overcome some fierce emotion, to which he durst not give way. Once he seemed on the point of leaving the room. But he changed his purpose, sat down with his head turned away from Lewis Frankland, and his clenched hand resting on the table.

"Now, sir, if you will be good enough to deliver your message, I am ready to hear it. I have borne much already—I can bear a little more."

"If I have offended, or pained you, Mr. Mowatt, I sincerely ask your pardon. I had no intention of doing either. Two valued friends have talked of you to me, and I promised to see you myself, if possible. They would have selected a different

messenger, could either of them have entertained a wish to add to your trials."

Mowatt bowed slightly, but seemed resolved not to speak, and again glanced irresolutely at the door.

"So far from this being the case," continued Lewis, "I believe I can give you the exact words which Sir Marcus used. 'A man of his abilities,' he said, speaking of you, 'ought not to be left in a position where he may be tempted, perhaps forced, to be the tool of others. If a brother surgeon's helping hand can save him, tell him he has only to stretch out his own.'"

"*He* said that—Sir Marcus Combermere?"

"He did; in the presence of Archdeacon Burleigh: who added his own message afterwards. 'Tell him from me,' were his words, 'that I have to thank Professor Dangerfield for a sharp lesson, which I ought to have learnt sooner; and that if Mr. Mowatt wishes to comfort an old man

who has had his share of sorrow, he will let him shake one hand while Sir Marcus takes hold of the other.'"

"He has forgiven me, then?" said Mowatt, in a choked voice.

"If you know the nature of the man you need not ask that question. He does nothing by halves. If he thinks he has wronged you by his past resentment, he will not rest till he has made amends. Come, Mr. Mowatt," added Lewis, "I am a younger man than you, and have no authority to give you advice, but I can see that with two such friends, and, I may add, a third in myself, you have no reason to be downhearted. It is a long lane that has no turning, and if you really have a mind for a fresh start, here it is ready. I am authorized to smooth away difficulties as far as I possibly can."

He stretched out his hand, which Mowatt grasped in his, held tightly for a moment, and then let fall; his head dropping at the

same time on his crossed arms, while his shoulders shook with passionate sobs. Lewis Frankland watched him anxiously, but refrained from checking the emotion, which might be a wholesome relief. Mowatt himself was the first to speak again.

"God bless you," he said, as he lifted his face from the table, "for your own kindness, and for the words you have repeated. Nobody knows but myself what it is to hear them, for nobody else knows what my life has been. But I can give you no other answer now. Unless it be this; to both your friends: Don't be so long another time, if you wish to save a miserable man—for it may be too late."

"I will not believe it," said Lewis; "it is never too late this side the grave. But I will leave you to think it over, and there is my card, if you like to look me up. I shall be a few days longer in town, and anything I can do I will."

Mowatt took the card, and, with a slight

bend of the head, put it in his waistcoat pocket.

"And now about Miss Wilmot's business. I have not ten guineas about me at this moment, but here are two; and the balance——"

"There is no balance, Mr. Frankland. Two guineas are quite sufficient; and I beg you will not mention it again. If the lady will take my advice she will give up these experiments, as they are more dangerous than she is aware of."

"I will tell her what you say," answered Lewis; and with another grasp of the hand they parted.

As the door closed behind the visitor, Mowatt sank down into his seat, his elbows on the table, his forehead resting on his hands. He did not stir, even when an inner door opened, and Cosmo Dangerfield, after cautiously reconnoitring the ground, entered, and stood at the other side of the table.

"A most touching scene—worthy of the stage," was the first remark of the Professor, after waiting for the other to speak.

Mowatt slowly raised his head, but made no reply.

"A very clever, plausible move, I grant you," continued Cosmo, "and worthy of the men. You might have starved long enough in Belgium, Mowatt, before such generous hands would have been held out to you had they not suspected you were growing dangerous."

"I said it came too late," replied Mowatt, unable to repress a heavy sigh. "You are witness that I accepted nothing."

"True; I am witness; and very much edified I was by your behaviour. A very little more, and I should have joined the party, to ask if there was to be no place for me in such a general reconciliation. I can weep, if necessary, as touchingly as the best of you."

"Don't try it here, then, for I am on my

present, the means of repaying; and it is not my way to turn round on those who do me a service."

"Suppose I could show you that it was the best way of requiting all obligation, and making a balance on the other side? Suppose that, by following the instructions I should give, you not only won friends among your old opponents, and gained a new career, and a probable fortune, but repaid me all my advances, and enabled me to dispense with your future services?"

"If that were possible, it would be a good day's work indeed. But it looks more like playing a double game than a winning one; and for that I am not prepared."

"Are you prepared for ruin—utter, hopeless, irretrievable?"

"No; and I would recommend no one to threaten me with it, Professor, yourself least of all. There are worse spirits to be called up by a hasty word than any with which you torture children."

Cosmo Dangerfield's face grew dark as night. His eyes gleamed with fury for a moment: though he controlled it sufficiently to make a calm reply.

"It is fit we should understand each other, Mowatt. I bear much from you on account of your skill; but if you pass the bounds of my courtesy, you must take the consequences. Dare, for an instant, to cross my plans; betray by a single word the trust I repose in you, and I shall know you are an enemy—and with enemies all is fair. What I should cover in a faithful friend, I should expose to scorn in a treacherous colleague; and I doubt whether your brother surgeon, or his venerable ally, would be ready to take your hand if they knew all it had been induced to do."

"Dangerfield, you are worse than I thought," gasped the unhappy man, shrinking back, not so much from the threat, as from the memories it invoked. "To make a man's past faults, instead of

a ladder by which he may rise to better things, a rope to drag him down deeper in the mire, is a work for the author of evil himself—and if I had ever doubted his existence I must believe in it now!"

The Professor smiled as if it had been a compliment. "Remember this, my dear Mowatt: I do not allow myself to be trifled with by any one who has once cast in his lot with me—on the other hand, no one who serves me well, and obeys me blindly, ever misses his reward. You have your choice to-day, which you will do. Either follow my instructions to the letter, and reap the good harvest which I foresee will ripen for us both; or break with me openly, and see what your forgiving and forgetting patrons in the North will do for you, when they hear what I should tell them. Choose, I say—and this instant; for I must know friend from foe."

"I have no choice; I must do your bidding, and you know it," said Mowatt,

who had become very pale, but spoke with comparative calmness. "I am only waiting to hear how my fortune is to be made. It has been a long time coming."

"Send out for a bottle of champagne, and I will show you."

Champagne was, as the Professor knew, Mowatt's favourite luxury, and their plans were generally matured under its influence. The fact of his proposing it was a token of his willingness to conciliate the vassal he had not hesitated to insult; a mixed treatment much resembling the policy he had followed with his deceased wife. Not till the glasses had been filled several times, did he resume the topic in the minds of both; and, this time, he spoke with the blandness of one who had only the good of his listener at heart.

"To go back to what we were saying, my dear fellow—I confess I did feel a little annoyed at such a palpable attempt to throw dust in your eyes with a few well-

turned sentences. Every word was an affront in itself, and I could hardly help stepping out to send the young schoolmaster back to his Latin grammar. But since they themselves have commenced the game, it would be a great pity not to go on with it, and the sooner you quarrel with wicked Cosmo Dangerfield, the better. You are turned out of your employment—you have not a farthing to call your own—you are willing to starve, sooner than be his tool any longer; but after the generous offers made you by Mr. Frankland, you feel drawn to accept the hands held out in such cordial brotherhood—if only you can see Sir Marcus Combermere and Archdeacon Burleigh yourself, and hear from their own lips that they wish to be your friends. If the young gentleman proposes their coming up to town, you find that you are not safe there another day; Cosmo Dangerfield is on your traces, and spies out everything you do; the only plan is for you

to hasten into the country as cheaply as possible, and lay the matter before them, wherever they are. Either at Grasmere, or at Comber Court, I need not point out what your next move will be; but you shall have full instructions nevertheless, Mowatt, and can report to me from time to time under some convenient private cover. The one person you must win, at all hazards, is my child's guardian, Miss Granard; it is through her only can we reach the child herself. I need not say that all idea of interfering with her custody of Emily is out of the question; the time for that is gone by. You have a serious task to perform—you have last words, wishes, warnings to convey, and cannot acquit yourself of the duty without her assistance. If you are half as clever as I believe you to be, you will be intimate with the young lady before her friends find out what you are doing, and then the rest will be easy."

"Easy, you say—to play such a part

before so many eyes, and not be found out as an impostor! And how is it that you like to trust me out of your sight? What is to prevent my doing in earnest what you are teaching me to do as a blind?"

"My dear fellow, it would be the making of us both, only I did not like to press too much upon you at once. Whatever and wherever you are, you cannot escape *me;* and therefore it would only make our game the safer that you turned it into earnest."

"And how about your séances? Can you carry them on alone?"

"I could; but I have had enough of London heat for the present, and Paul and I are going to the seaside. And that reminds me—I am quite ready to give favourable terms for any authentic revelations; you managed so well last night that I was quite sorry when the boy stopped. Was all that story genuine?"

"I believe so."

"Can you follow it up? Have you a clue to the mystery?"

"Not quite yet; but I am on its trace, and when I am certain myself, you shall know more."

"Come, old fellow, a cheque will be worth more than a secret; name your price, and I will pay you cash down."

"Quite out of the question—you are the last person in the world to whom I would sell my knowledge. I repented of what I had done when I saw that lady's face."

"Nay, nay, you need not go so far as that; a little repentance may be useful, but too much would only hinder business; and after all—— What now?" he asked, interrupting himself, as the youth in charge looked in from the shop.

"The gentleman has called again to see Mr. Cloud."

"Ask him to wait a few minutes."

The minutes seemed very long to Lewis Frankland. He was in a fever of impatience and vexation by the time he was admitted.

"I have done the most idiotic thing," he

began: "left my parcel in a cab. I got into one to save time; saw a friend I had not met for years, and jumped out to stop him; never thought of the box till after I had sent away the hansom. I must give notice in Scotland Yard; only I may be asked what it contains. What am I to say? Dangerous chemicals; or what?"

Mowatt, whose face was now as much flushed as it had previously been pale, reflected a moment before he spoke.

"I had better go about it myself, Mr. Frankland. I should be very sorry if the box were damaged, and it will be a great disappointment to Miss Wilmot."

"But it will take up your time."

"My time, sir, is now all my own. Much has happened since you were here. Professor Dangerfield, of whom you have heard——"

"The greatest rascal living!"

"Well, that is somewhat strong language, but I am not going to dispute the point.

The essential fact is, that he, the Professor, overheard some of our conversation, and he considers the messages you delivered tantamount to a corruption of my fidelity—I am here as his hired servant. Our discussion on the matter has ended in my leaving his service, and I have no other to look to, and nowhere to go."

"Then you are free, and can accept my friends' offers without a scruple," said Lewis, quickly. "It is the very best thing that could have happened, next to hearing that that fellow had been horsewhipped. I am not a fighter by trade, but I never longed to administer chastisement to any one as to him. The worst of all cruel bullying is that which tortures nervous minds and tender hearts."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Frankland; and I could wish he were your pupil for the sole purpose of the correction. We will go at once in search of this cab, if you please; and settle our plans as we walk along."

Cecilia Wilmot was on the watch; and when her messenger returned, she slipped out to meet him on the stairs. His penitence and regret for the loss gave her a shock which explanation could not soften. He had made inquiries, and promised a reward; but, as yet, had heard nothing. Cloud hoped to get it by describing the contents, and he would bring the box himself as soon as it was found.

"I cannot express how vexed I am, especially as I see I have vexed you," Lewis added, with a sincerity that could not be mistaken, and Cecilia was unable to conceal her annoyance. A telegram had come from Mr. Bourne, announcing his intention to be in town that evening, and hoping the ladies would be ready to travel the next day; and the news had by no means improved her spirits. Lewis had never seen her so petulant and unreasonable; and yet she looked so pretty with her pouting and anger, and he was so convinced

she had been hardly dealt with, and was suffering from wounded affection, that he pitied and forbore, and did all he could to atone for his carelessness. Mrs. Archdale lost patience at last, and told Cecilia she ought to be ashamed of being so childish—"any one would suppose the box was of value."

Lewis fired up in her defence directly, observing that it must be expensive stuff, as the usual charge was ten guineas. The astonishment of both ladies startled him; and being called upon to explain, he had to confess he had paid Cloud two guineas, not having the rest about him. Cloud had behaved like a gentleman about it, and was satisfied with the amount; only he advised Miss Wilmot not to repeat the experiment.

Mrs. Archdale's keen eyes were on Cecilia, and she saw there was something wrong.

"Child," she said, going up to her with the imperious air she could at times assume,

"I shielded you once; I deserve better treatment than to have my own weapons turned against me. Where is my mother's portrait? Is it in the missing box?"

Cecilia threw herself on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands.

"It is," she confessed. "I let him take it away. He said I should look into futurity if I did—and that much, much depended on it—your happiness, and that of—of several people, Mrs. Archdale; and though I don't believe in these things, I did wish to see what would come out. He promised it should be returned quite safely, and I meant to tell you afterwards; I did indeed!"

Mrs. Archdale turned away from the beseeching countenance, and walked out of the room. Cecilia burst into a passion of tears, and Lewis sat silently by, looking, not at her, but on the floor. He was very sorry for her mortification—he could hardly sit in the room and hear her sob—but the thought of her untruth was terrible, over-

powering all the rest. It was like the fading of the rose glow from the mountain peak; the magic beauty gone—only the cold white of the snow left—the hard grey of the granite rock. Would any return of sunshine bring the illusion back?

Cecilia seemed resolved to try. It needed no monitor to tell her what she had done; and she roused her energies to the effort, sooner than lose all at one stroke.

"I know what you are thinking of me, Mr. Frankland, though you are too kind to remind me of my fault." And she poured out a confession of bad habits and failure of good intentions, as if she had been addressing an elder brother, whose rebuke she knew she merited, but on whose indulgence she relied. Without naming Ernest, she contrived to imply what she had been enduring from his absence, and from the news of his engagement; and the only excuse she attempted was that which she knew her listener would himself recognize—

that she had felt for the time almost reckless, hardly knowing what she did. He was willing to believe it, and hope the best; her self-abasement, as she knew, made him all the more ready to take her part. She was not perfect, by any means; Kate Combermere would have scorned all these little windings and twistings, that to her seemed too natural; but when she owned her faults so touchingly, and asked advice how to conquer them, what could he do but comfort her?

His intention had been to return to the North by the night mail; but her urgent entreaties induced him to postpone the journey, and to promise to look in to see Mr. Bourne. And when the evening arrived, and Lewis called, according to this promise, he was shown into the dining-room, where that gentleman was sitting alone—wine and dessert before him.

"A strange state of things, this," Mr. Bourne observed, after pushing the wine

and fruit to Lewis; "I thought young Archdale was a wiser fellow. But he must please himself. His mother never knew how to bring him up, and, of course, all he does is right—and now, instead of going down with us to-morrow, she talks of joining him at the Lakes. I must say, they are both cool hands; it will be some time before I ask them again."

Lewis made some good-humoured remark on there being a lady in the case. A dissatisfied nod was the only answer.

"There is no knowing what you youngsters aim at. I should have expected that you, who were the lady's rescuer, would have been the chosen swain. Perhaps you did not give her the choice?"

Lewis admitted the fact, while expressing sincere admiration and regard for Miss Granard. The old gentleman seemed to be pondering something in his mind for some minutes, when he abruptly asked

his guest to go down to the sea with them. His wife would be sadly disappointed at the double failure, and would make him heartily welcome; and if he had a mind to ride, he could easily get a mount. Lewis thanked him, but was doubtful; in fact, though he knew it was dangerous, he could not decide till he had looked at Cecilia; one glance would be enough. If she really wished it, he would go—at all risks, and in spite of other plans; but if she was indifferent, all the better for both. In that case, he should start for the Lakes in the morning, and take Mowatt with him.

"So Mrs. Archdale fails you after all?" he observed to Miss Wilmot, while handing her a cup of tea.

"Yes," was the dejected answer; "she forgives, but she cannot forget: and I do not deserve that she should. I shall not have a single person near me whom I care to speak to, and I shall have no rides, which I have been looking forward to so

long. Could not you persuade yourself, Mr. Frankland, that your duty calls you to take a little sea-bathing?"

"Duty is not the question; it is entirely one of pleasure. Mr. Bourne has been pressing me to go with you."

"You don't mean it? And you will, of course? You cannot refuse Sir Marcus's old friend, if you could be hard-hearted to— to me."

The last word was dropped with an arch glance at his face, and a wistful, half-sorrowful smile, that disarmed all his resolution. And Mr. Lewis Frankland took his seat by her side, and they made their plans for an agreeable week in Kent, as if neither had a thought beyond.

Mrs. Archdale looked at them as she sat apart, a slight smile curling her lip; but she was pale, and had an anxious, troubled expression, which Mr. Bourne could not help noticing. With more kindness than he usually showed her, he observed that she

had been tiring herself in nursing others, and wanted rest.

"It is a pity you cannot come down with us, but I quite understand why you are wanted elsewhere. Have you a decent pen here, Cecilia?"

She brought him her own dainty writing-case. He tumbled it over in quest of a plain sheet of paper, everything being decorated with monograms and devices innumerable. Having written a few lines, he folded them into her largest envelope. With this in his hand, he sat down by Mrs. Archdale, to talk over Ernest's prospects. He was a man who could be very tiresome in small matters, and show real kindness about great; and he seemed anxious to prove to her and himself that what he had heard could make no difference in his goodwill. Ernest had shown a capacity for work, far exceeding his expectations, and his plan now was to give him a settled position in the business, with

a liberal salary; not enough to marry upon, but sufficient to make him comfortable until he could become a partner. To do that, he must be able to throw some capital into the concern, and in time, when the old man wore out, he would be the actual and working head. "By that time, Miss Granard will be at liberty, if the poor child lives, and then they can do as pleases them, and you," concluded Mr. Bourne.

Mrs. Archdale took his hand, and pressed it in both her own. He gave hers a hearty squeeze, and left her with the letter he had just written, in her lap; walking away himself to the conservatory, where he was accustomed to indulge in a cigarette, for the benefit of the geraniums. She opened the envelope—it contained a few lines of congratulation, and a cheque for fifty pounds.

At that moment the servant entered, and announced Mr. Cloud. He had called to see Miss Wilmot.

Cecilia looked at Mrs. Archdale in dismay, for Mr. Bourne was not quite out of hearing. She understood the appeal.

"I will go and speak to Cloud, my dear. I will tell him you require no more attendance."

As she left the room, Mr. Bourne looked in from the conservatory. "Who is it, Cecilia?"

She held up her finger to Lewis, with an arch look, and tripped across the room to explain—not exactly the true facts of the case, but as many as were expedient. While Mrs. Archdale hastened to the library, where Mowatt was waiting.

END OF VOL. II.

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